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# PRIZE SERMONS

11

CHURCH MANAGEMENT CONTEST

COMPILED BY

WILLIAM H. LEACH

111

BOARD OF JUDGES

GAIUS GLENN ATKINS CHARLES W. FERGUSON

WILLIAM PETER KING WILLIAM H. LEACH

J. W. G. WARD



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## FOREWORD

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IN THE SPRING of 1933 *Church Management* announced plans for a sermon contest among its subscribers. The back purpose of the plan was to provide another common interest for its readers. The interest shown in the announcement was very pleasing. Several hundred sermons were submitted. The twelve given in highest rating, by the board of judges, were published in the October, 1933, issue of *Church Management*.

The reception of the contest idea that first year indicated that a similar one in 1934 would be welcomed. This time the entries totaled about five hundred sermons. For a more permanent preservation the leading seventeen are being placed in book form and are presented in this volume.

Both in 1933 and 1934 an award of one hundred dollars was made to the writer of the sermon which received the highest rating. In 1933 the winner

### Prize Sermons

was Samuel Macauley Lindsay, pastor of the Baptist Church, Brookline, Massachusetts. The 1934 winner is W. O. Carrington, pastor of the John Wesley A. M. E. Zion Church, Washington, D. C. His sermon, "The Margin of Goodness," appears with the other high rating sermons in this book.

The thanks of the entire family of subscribers to *Church Management* are due to the board of judges for their painstaking work in reading and marking the sermons. These men are Gaius Glenn Atkins, Professor of Homiletics and Sociology, Auburn Theological Seminary; Charles W. Ferguson, President Round Table Press, Inc.; William Peter King, Editor, *Christian Advocate* (Nashville); J. W. G. Ward, pastor, First Presbyterian Church, Oak Park, Illinois, and the editor of *Church Management*.

Will *Church Management* conduct a 1935 contest? No decision has been made to date. If one is to be conducted adequate announcement will be made in one of the spring, 1935, issues of the magazine.

For convenience the sermons have been arranged in biblical order.

WILLIAM H. LEACH,  
*Editor, Church Management.*



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## CHAPTER ONE

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### *Our Secret Faults*

BY ALFRED BRIGHT <sup>1</sup>

Cleanse thou me from secret faults.

Psalm 19: 12.

**T**HIS prayer of the psalmist is one that is frequently made throughout the Psalms. "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than the snow. . . . Create in me a clean heart, O God." <sup>2</sup> This is the prayer of every true man in the most elevated moods of his life. In the thoughtful hours of life, every true man prays the psalmist's prayer that he might have a pure heart, free from every secret sin.

One thing I of the Lord desire,  
For all my way hath miry been;  
Be it by water or by fire,  
O make me clean!

The secret faults referred to by the psalmist are those of which he himself is unconscious. They

<sup>1</sup> For a biographical sketch of Alfred Bright, see p. 212.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 51: 7, 10.

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are the faults which others may or may not see in him but which are always before God. We see them in others. We see these secret faults in our friends and in the members of the family circle. Often they appear to us as cynical, selfish, deceitful, or unforgiving. They are as totally ignorant that they possess these faults as we that we possess them. It is so easy to see the sins of other folks while the growth of our secret faults are unobserved. Our hidden fault has lived with us in the same home, in the same place of toil, until we are living such a life as God knows we never meant to live, and tampering with conscience and trifling with purity. The most deadly perils of my heart creep upon me. "Gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not."<sup>3</sup>

Thus it is logical to conclude that if we can see faults in neighbors, in friends, and in our nearest relative of which they are unconscious we too must have faults which we do not suspect. These are the secret faults from which the psalmist prays to be delivered, secret faults of which he is not conscious, but God knows about them and his friends note them. May our secret sins and not our conscious ones be our chief concern, and then we shall

<sup>3</sup> Hosea 7: 9.



pray with the psalmist that God will cleanse us from every fault.

Let me mention some evil effects which secret faults have upon life and character.

#### I. OUR SECRET FAULTS WEAKEN OUR ABILITY TO MAKE A DECISION FOR THE RIGHT

Where is there a better illustration of how secret faults leave us powerless to make a decision for the right than in the case of Pilate, the man who was responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus? We read the narrative about our Lord's death and we see how anxious Pilate was to liberate Jesus. Pilate sends Jesus to Herod; then he offers Barabbas as a substitute for the condemned Prisoner; next he enters into controversy with the priests; then in a dramatic way he calls for a basin of water so that in the presence of the assembled multitude he might wash his hands as a protestation of his innocence; as a final appeal to the pity of the mob he has Jesus publically scourged so that the sight of Jesus, pale and physically exhausted, might excite the pity of the Jews. Why could not Pilate follow his better judgment and that of his wife? All the power of the greatest earthly power of that day was invested in his hands. He was the Roman governor. The answer is not far to seek. His own

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past secret conduct had forged chains about him and crippled him in a decision for the right. He had done things in his own private life which would not bear the light of public scrutiny. The Jewish leaders knew this and threatened exposure to the Roman emperor, and that meant deposition, exile, or possibly death. Thus Pilate stood before the mob clamoring for the blood of Jesus the very picture of irresolution and moral weakness, owing to the secret sins of his life. Against his own better judgment he handed Jesus over to the enemy. Pilate's secret faults so weakened him morally that he found it doubly hard to make a right decision.

It is always true that a clean heart gives the courage to make a great decision for the right. Lorenzo the Magnificent and Savonarola, the prophet of Florence, had had many a dispute with reference to the affairs of the city of Florence. They had quarreled frequently. Savonarola would not bow to Lorenzo and Lorenzo would not submit to the demands of Savonarola. But Lorenzo, in his dying hour, sent for the faithful prophet of Florence, saying, "He was the only priest who ever dared differ with me." Here was a leader of men, because his heart was pure, never feared the threats of his enemies, and never yielded to the pressure of circumstances. It is not the man who has scarred



body and soul with the deeds of evil who can be counted on to do the right when a principle of righteousness is at stake. It is rather one like Sir Galahad whose heart is pure:

My good blade carves the casques of men,  
My tough lance thrusteth sure,  
My strength is as the strength of ten  
Because my heart is pure.<sup>4</sup>

## II. OUR SECRET FAULTS WEAKEN OUR ABILITY TO RESIST A GREAT TEMPTATION

What makes this prayer of the psalmist so urgent is the fact that our secret sins are preparing us for our open falls. Our great sins are not momentary overthrows. A man cherishes some hidden iniquity of which his dearest friends are blissfully ignorant; finally, one day like a thunderbolt from a clear sky, the secret is out and the loved ones are shocked beyond expression. Do not imagine this man was carried off his feet by some gust of passion or sudden impulse. For years he had been secretly gloating over the unclean thing, finding a secret pleasure in it, rehearsing the unholy thing, and one day under the pressure of temptation he unexpectedly gives way. The soil was silently prepared for this rank weed. So our sudden moral collapse, when

<sup>4</sup> Alfred Lord Tennyson.



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character was forfeited, was not as sudden as we first thought.

Builders of houses in tropical countries are often plagued by the pest of white ants, who work invisibly and secretly. The presence of these insects is not suspected. The owner sitting in his home imagines his house as strong as the day he built it. He suddenly discovers that the white ants have been eating out the very heart of the timbers and the whole superstructure collapses about his head. He thought himself secure, but all the time he was housed in an empty shell. No one had heard or seen or even detected the presence of the enemy. The secret ravages stand revealed in some moment of testing, when a windstorm sweeps over the house. If that is a picture of my sinful heart, then let me cry from the depths of my being with the psalmist, "Cleanse me from secret faults, O God."

We have often admired a stalwart tree. The tree was covered with luxuriant foliage giving every evidence of vigorous life. One day to our amazement we saw this stately tree leveled to the ground by some windstorm. Upon examination we discovered that some insect had found its way to the heart of the tree and for years had been gnawing at its vitals, sapping the very life of this tree. When some sudden onslaught of the wind blew

upon the tree, it fell. The storm revealed the strength and the weakness of the tree. The day is coming far sooner than we think when the secret carelessness or the buried sin shall not be a secret any longer. In that day of testing our naked weakness will stand revealed. A sudden temptation, a change of circumstances, a crisis, or a call from eternity, and then all the sappings of principle we smothered in the common days will be written on our brow. "Samson arose and shook himself as on former occasions, and he wist not that his strength was gone from him"; but "the Philistines are upon thee, Sampson,"<sup>5</sup> and he discovered that his secret sins had robbed him of the ability to resist a great temptation.

### III. THE SINS THAT BRING MEN TO OPEN SHAME WERE ONCE UPON A TIME SECRET FAULTS

There is no wiser prayer in the Bible than the one of our meditation, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults." For all the open exposure of sin, which cover us with confusion and shame, was once upon a time the secret faults of our sinful hearts. Our habitual thoughts reveal themselves in daily conduct. Sooner or later the things which a man cherishes in his heart appear in his life. Our de-

<sup>5</sup> Judges 16: 20.



## *Our Secret Faults*

turbed us now gives us no feeling of shame because it has become a habit, and habit often conceals our faults from us. We let slip our good-night prayer to Christ one night. It disturbed us. The next night it troubled us less. Then when we need to pray the power is gone. Our secret fault is now a prayerless habit. The big sins scare us, and if we sin by them we feel sorely ashamed; but the little sins we never notice or feel. They fray our heart until its love wears thin, and God's merciful kindness, and our parents' love, and the trust of our friends fall away and are forgotten. So the sins which once shocked us and brought the blush of shame to our cheeks have with the passing years become our secret faults.

All this teaches us to pray with the psalmist, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults." We must ask God for his Holy Spirit to aid us in the painful work of exploring the dark passages and the dusty corners of our heart to see what destructive ravages secret sin is working there. Our hearts may be stained by secret faults, but Jesus makes the foulest clean. Far away on the shore of the Arctic Sea is a solitary grave on the brow of a hill covered with snow. There lies one of the crew of the "Alert," the ship in which Sir George Nares explored the Arctic regions. A large stone covers the dead, and



upon the tree, it fell. The storm revealed the strength and the weakness of the tree. The day is coming far sooner than we think when the secret carelessness or the buried sin shall not be a secret any longer. In that day of testing our naked weakness will stand revealed. A sudden temptation, a change of circumstances, a crisis, or a call from eternity, and then all the sappings of principle we smothered in the common days will be written on our brow. "Samson arose and shook himself as on former occasions, and he wist not that his strength was gone from him"; but "the Philistines are upon thee, Sampson,"<sup>5</sup> and he discovered that his secret sins had robbed him of the ability to resist a great temptation.

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<sup>5</sup> Judges 16: 20.

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sires and thoughts write themselves on our life as the tippler's habits declare themselves in his flushed face and bleary eyes or as the saint's prayers refine the face. Change a man's heart and you will begin to change his face.

There is a sense in which there is really no such thing as a secret fault. Sin is always coming to the surface. The hidden conflicts of the heart which we imagine so unobserved become written in character and finally clothe us as a garment. Our speech betrays us. Our look is a telltale look. The hidden sins of my heart today will be the visible robe I shall wear tomorrow.

Let us remember this when we are alone with our hidden shame or secret lust. A man who has lived purely for many years will come to find purity on every hand. When a man becomes cynical and sneering of sacred things he is only registering openly the secret condition of his heart. A pure heart means a pure life. A foul heart means a foul life. The late minister of Barony Parish, Glasgow, Norman MacLeod, tells how once in Skye he watched an eagle rise with a calm sweep of its mighty wings and proud in its strength. All of a sudden in mid-air, it paused and fluttered and fell with a thud on the hillside. He went to see the cause of the eagle's sudden fall and found the dead



bird with a torn and mangled weasel in its talons and with the weasel's tiny teeth fast in the noble bird's heart. The eagle had picked up this creature and soared away to its nest with it and had forgotten the nature of this creeping creature. The weasel had wriggled its way through the talons of the eagle and had fastened on its heart. The bird discovered its danger too late for its grip was the grip of death. Think of these two creatures. One is an ugly, creeping beast of the field. The other is the king of birds, sweeping the air as on the wings of some strong angel. Beware of secret faults for they will not lie quiet in our hand, but will cling and will be always working their way to our very heart. We may rise high, but if there is a secret sin rising with us, it will bring us very low, "Be sure your sin will find you out."<sup>6</sup>

#### IV. OUR SECRET FAULTS BECOME THE FIXED HABITS OF LIFE

People who live near a great cataract such as Niagara never hear the sound of the rushing waters. Men who live near a railway junction are not startled by the screeching sounds of the locomotive in the night.

We possibly remember the act which once dis-

<sup>6</sup> Numbers 32: 23.



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turbed us now gives us no feeling of shame because it has become a habit, and habit often conceals our faults from us. We let slip our good-night prayer to Christ one night. It disturbed us. The next night it troubled us less. Then when we need to pray the power is gone. Our secret fault is now a prayerless habit. The big sins scare us, and if we sin by them we feel sorely ashamed; but the little sins we never notice or feel. They fray our heart until its love wears thin, and God's merciful kindness, and our parents' love, and the trust of our friends fall away and are forgotten. So the sins which once shocked us and brought the blush of shame to our cheeks have with the passing years become our secret faults.

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*Alfred Bright*

on a copper tablet at the head the words are engraved, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." How fitting were the words inscribed on that grave amid the eternal snows! But the prayer is one for all to use; and whoever shall offer it from the heart shall receive the gracious promise, "I will; be thou clean."<sup>7</sup>

Yea, only as the heart is clean  
May larger vision yet be mine,  
For mirrored in its depths are seen  
The things divine.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 8: 3.



## CHAPTER TWO

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### *They Got What They Wanted*

BY RAYMOND C. BURNS <sup>1</sup>

He let them have what they desired, then—  
made them loathe it.

Psalms 106: 15.<sup>2</sup>

I SUPPOSE that the most disillusioning experience in the world is getting what you want and hating what you get. Some people spend their days in such a cycle of wanting, getting, and hating. If they die happy it will be because they die swiftly at that particular moment when they got what they wanted and before they could begin to hate what they got. We attempt to explain unhappiness by the theory of unfulfilled desire. It is an inadequate theory. There are unhappy people who can be explained only on the basis of their fulfilled desires. There is a tremendous number of people who are going to be unhappy, not because they will be frustrated in their dominant desires, but precisely because they will get what they want.

<sup>1</sup> For a biographical sketch of Raymond C. Burns, see p. 213.

<sup>2</sup> From *The Holy Bible: A New Translation*, by James Maffatt, D.D. Copyright, 1925. By permission of Harper & Brothers, publishers.

Now this fact was not first observed on the day before yesterday. Centuries ago a poet observed this paradox and put it in a book which long ago was ordained to be read in the churches. He applied this paradox to history. He knew nothing of the economic interpretation of history, but he knew something of the desires of the human heart which make both economics and history. He applied this strange, contradictory fact to Hebrew history from Egypt to Sinai, and wrote upon it all this significant epitaph: "He [God] let them have what they desired, then—made them loathe it!"

That is our text this morning. It is fascinating scripture, but we are not interested in it for itself. We ask it not only to illumine the past but to throw light upon the present and the future. We explain machines in terms of gasoline, electricity, and steam; but we also make machines go by gasoline, electricity, and steam. Just so desire may explain history, but desire also makes history. Desires make us. Because this is true, anything that would make life more noble, intelligent, or happy must come to grips with our desires. Both education and religion, the two forces that aspire most to direct human life toward completeness, show their keenest insight here. Note how often and with what insight the word "desire" is used in the book of



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Psalms and the book of Proverbs, the book of worship and the book of wisdom. "The desire of the wicked shall perish."<sup>3</sup> "The desire of the slothful killeth him."<sup>4</sup> When Dr. Thorndike speaks for education he says that our aim should be to make our wants better. When Mr. Lippmann speaks for ethics he advises us to limit our desires. When Buddhism speaks for the wisdom of the East it says, Suppress your desires. When Christianity speaks it says, Lift your desires. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."<sup>5</sup>

Of course there is another answer. In Christ's figure of speech, it is the broad and easy way that leads to destruction. It is the way of uncriticized desire. The people of our text were not unhappy merely because they desired something. It was what they desired that made them unhappy. "God let them have what they desired, then—made them loathe it." They are like the dog and the train in a story I read sometime ago. Every day when the train reached a certain spot, there lay the dog in a field, in ambush. As the train passed, the dog dashed for it, every hair bristling, every muscle

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 112: 10.

<sup>4</sup> Proverbs 21: 25.

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 5: 6.

strained to reach that train. I wonder what the dog would have done if the unexpected had happened and he had actually caught the train. To be sure a man may be honoring his desires altogether too much if he challenges it sharply for good or evil. It may be merely sensible or silly. But to rush after *uncriticized* desires is sometimes to engage in a mad chase to get what one really doesn't want and couldn't use if he got.

Sometimes our uncriticized desires are not merely silly. They are dangerous. Did you ever hear how Brer Crocodile got his rough skin? It happened one day that Brer Crocodile, whose skin was then white and milky, saw Brer Rabbit brooding by the river bank. Brer Crocodile asked him what was the matter, and Brer Rabbit replied that he had seen trouble. Brer Crocodile was filled with curiosity. He had never seen trouble, he said, but he would like to see him once. So Brer Rabbit gave Brer Crocodile directions, and Brer Crocodile went crawling off into the long dry grass by the river-side, looking for trouble. Then Brer Rabbit loped off and fired the grass between Brer Crocodile and the river and in front of him and on every side of him. And the grass fire, roaring along, baked and blistered Brer Crocodile's skin and he found trouble.



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There are tragedies that we cannot avert. But to look for a tragedy, through long days to stalk and finally to pounce upon it and hug it to ourselves, to "look for trouble"—that is the height of human folly. That is also very often the result of uncriticized desire. Why should it not be? Desire had to meet no questions, pass no intelligence test, answer no sharp challenge, "Friend or enemy?" before we admitted it. It was enough that it was *our desire*. We did not demand to know whether its satisfaction meant tragedy or more abundant life. Yet, if we are not prepared to criticize what we want, then we must be prepared to loathe what we get.

The more subtle danger of uncriticized desires, however, is that they tend to accumulate until a man's happiness depends upon carrying the whole load and satisfying every one. Sometime ago Mr. Lippmann wrote an article about a poor man. This was a particular brand of poor man, because he was poor on sixteen thousand dollars a year. He was an extremely careful and frugal man. He rented or borrowed all the novels he read. He bought very few things and never at retail price. He always had a friend or a friend who had a friend who could get the article wholesale or at a discount. This man had received an income of about sixteen

thousand dollars a year for the last twenty years. After the war the values of his investments doubled, although his income remained about the same. "I am now a wealthy man," he said to himself. He rented an apartment at six thousand dollars a year, he got a limousine that cost five thousand dollars a year, and he hired a valet whose wages and traveling expenses came to two thousand five hundred dollars a year. He took the apartment on a long lease because he was afraid the rents might go up. He became especially attached to the limousine. It gave him a feeling of importance, and put him in the class with all of his friends. So now he gets discounts on all he buys, and borrows against his property, and sneaks past the cloakroom girl without tipping. He feels not merely poor, but hunted.

What is wrong? The cause is very simple, although the cure is heroic. The man's desires have accumulated until his happiness depends upon satisfying the whole, uncriticized lot of them.

Unfortunately this man is not alone the product of his accumulated uncriticized desires. He is the product of a philosophy which discourages the criticism of our desires. For a decade now it has been blared from every radio and suggested in every magazine that progress depends upon our con-



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tinually wanting and buying more things. Now obviously enough there is something wrong with an economic philosophy whose major premise is that people shall go on wanting more and more things and the latest model of those things and the newest attachment on those things. In the first place, such desires are too easily thwarted. Physical incapacity that cuts down one's earning power, or a business depression, will cut off the satisfaction of such desires one by one. When life consists of the abundance of things that a man has, the loss of those things leaves one no life at all, but only a sense of complete frustration, uselessness, and defeat.

In the second place, there can never be wealth enough to satisfy desires that are continually growing, for having possessed one thing a man will immediately become unhappy desiring another. So it will always be under any conceivable economic, social, or political regime. Only an inward but nevertheless courageous revolution can free a man from slavery to his own desires, once they have begun to rule him. The final declaration of independence must be written in the soul.

What can a man do to possess his soul? First, one can decrease the number of wants that must be satisfied. He can decrease the number of things that he must have in order to be happy. Those

who know the Gospels at all will not argue about the simplicity of Christ. His wants were few. There is a hard saying which is nevertheless a suggestion of what Jesus would say today to one whose life is cluttered with a lot of hungers and hankerings which must be filled before the man can be content. "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out." <sup>6</sup>

This simplicity make Jesus brave. He had not mortgaged his freedom to his desires. Even when he knew his death was planned he could proudly say, "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself." <sup>7</sup>

Now this is not an easy thing to say in 1934. It seems like making a virtue of necessity. It seems like a mockery of those who have nothing and deserve as much as any of us. I can only say that I should not dare to say these things in 1934 if I had not already said them in 1929. I should not say them unless they represent a service to us all in these days. For even in a period of prosperity a man cannot satisfy his desires if he desires everything. There is no wealth or good fortune in any conceivable economic or social order that will appease an appetite that is insatiable. How refreshing it

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 5: 29.

<sup>7</sup> John 10: 18.



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is, after a decade of listening to a blaring exhortation to buy more and more, to hear Christ saying quietly, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst."<sup>8</sup> One does not have to accept our social order as righteous any more than Paul accepted paganism as righteous, and yet a man can find in Christ something that enables him to say, as Paul said, "I have learned . . . to be content."<sup>9</sup> That, it seems to me, is a great thing to learn. And I do not see how any man can learn it except by keeping at a minimum the number of wants that must be satisfied before he can be happy.

The second thing we can do with our wants is to raise their quality. Christianity gives an answer fundamentally different to the answer of Buddhism. Buddhism gives a logical answer, but it is the answer of complete renunciation. Buddhism says, Suppress your desires. Christ's answer is the way of higher appreciation. Christ says, Lift the quality of your desires. St. Paul quotes seldom from Jesus' words, but he has discovered Jesus' spirit when he says, "Covet earnestly the best gifts."<sup>10</sup>

It all depends, you see, on what we desire. There

<sup>8</sup> John 4: 14.

<sup>10</sup> I Corinthians 12: 31.

<sup>9</sup> Philippians 4: 11.

are some desires that run out. The worldly-wise author of Ecclesiastes had pursued them and at the end he wrote a sad epitaph to his life, "Desire shall fail." There are desires whose satisfaction is silly or a tragedy or a burden. "God let them have what they desired, then—made them loathe it." The answer to all this, said Jesus, is to choose those desires whose satisfaction is an eternally noble matter. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven."<sup>11</sup> The answer is not asceticism. And old professor of mine used to say that the beatitude of Buddhism was, "Blessed are those who desire nothing, for they will never be disappointed." The beatitude of Jesus, you know, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."<sup>12</sup> The second suggestion of the Gospels is that we should raise the quality of our desires.

But this is not the Gospel. The Gospel does go infinitely further. Jesus did limit the number of his desires, so we can speak without question of the simplicity of Christ. Jesus did keep the quality of his desires high. But when Jesus spoke the very

<sup>11</sup> Matthew 6: 19, 20.

<sup>12</sup> Matthew 5: 6.



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heart of his Gospel, it was this, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." <sup>13</sup> Choose one dominant desire. St. Paul grasped this and spoke of it in a passage of incomparable beauty. "Covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way." <sup>14</sup> "Love suffereth long, and is kind; . . . . Love never faileth; . . . . Follow after love." <sup>15</sup> This desire always to be in a relationship of loving trust with God and one's neighbor can bring nothing but peace and do nothing but good. We can do no better than Christ did and trust our lives to a great devotion.

Consider what this dominant desire does for a man. When it is placed at the helm, it steers his life. Without some desire that masters all other desires there is no unity about a man. He is a mere collection of desires. He is "not a man but a mob." He is at the mercy of every whim, and his whims blow from every point of the compass. When his desires clash he can appeal to no higher authority to set the course. The one way out is one dominant desire before which every other must bow his head. "If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." <sup>16</sup> Christ's life was good be-

<sup>13</sup> Matthew 12: 31.

<sup>14</sup> I Corinthians 12: 31.

<sup>15</sup> I Corinthians 13: 4, 8; 14: 1.

<sup>16</sup> Matthew 6: 22.

cause it was dominated by one great and completely good desire. We call him Master because he was mastered by God.

There is no better reminder of what this devotion can do in and through life than this communion table about which we meet this morning. See what it led to in Christ! Here is friendship of the noblest and most unselfish sort. "This is my body, broken for you."<sup>17</sup> Here is a pity that includes every man of the race. Here is the determination that can work changes in our slow old world. "This is my blood . . . which is shed for many."<sup>18</sup> Here is supreme understanding of the human heart. He does not drive us into the Kingdom of God. He leaves us merely a memorial of his devotion to it and to us. If life causes produce like effects, I do not expect to see a life like that again except to the degree that men give themselves with a great devotion to God.

May this fellowship increase that devotion in us.

<sup>17</sup> I Corinthians 11: 24.

<sup>18</sup> Mark 14: 24.



## CHAPTER THREE

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### *Have We Any Use For a God?*

BY MILTON M. MCGORRILL <sup>1</sup>

My help cometh from the Lord, which made  
heaven and earth. Psalm 121: 2.

OUR question is phrased designedly, for many people have difficulty with the idea of God, not on its credibility but on its function, not in its truth but in its value. Some thinkers have told us we use our minds to justify what we desire. The reasonableness of theism is not so difficult as the use of theism. Thus, though the question of the existence of God is significant, we are asking what is the use of God in these days and among this self-confessed enlightened generation.

Many persons can see how God was helpful in another generation when people did not have as much to depend on as they have now. Believing in a personal agent for every act, people found it easy to believe in a general director of the forces of the universe who was amenable to certain requests

<sup>1</sup> For a biographical sketch of Milton M. McGorrill, see p. 219.

delivered in the accurate way. But today, ah, that is different. If we want anything, we turn to a scientist who develops antitoxin to fight our battle against diphtheria, who shows us scientific agriculture to solve our problem of food supply. With the coming of science many think that Matthew Arnold was right when he said,

The sea of faith  
Was once, too, at the full and round earth's shore,  
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.  
But now I only hear  
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,  
Retreating to the breath  
Of the night wind, down the vast edges drear  
And naked shingles of the world.

There are others who say with contempt that for certain personalities that need to be propped up God is helpful. But to what William James called the tough-minded, God performs no useful function. Such persons may be likened to the contemplated statue of Lenin planned to be put on top of the proposed new Palace of the Soviet at Moscow. This statue several hundred feet high will picture Lenin in jacket and trousers with his arm outstretched seemingly challenging the heavens. This may be the symbol for those tough-minded and



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self-assertive who have dispensed with God as of any use in the world whose every necessity can be supplied by man. Of course one will have some serious questions in such a situation. One will find much unexplained. For example, how such a tough-minded person as Washington, willing to undertake the task of founding a new nation, discovered great value in God; or a Chinese Gordon, distinguished military commander, who said he prayed his boats up the Nile; or a Shackleton, who had courage to fight the frozen Antarctic but who felt the presence of God with him all the way.

We do eliminate at the start, however, two functions that have often been attributed to God but which we know now we cannot expect from God. We dispose of any use for God as a device for changing the orderliness of nature in our particular behalf. Our moral nature must compel us to get rid of that. The rain still falls upon the just and the unjust as Jesus so long ago said it did. And it falls according to atmospheric conditions and not according to the prayers of worshipers, however devoutly given. Whatever else we may expect from God we regard it as unwarranted effrontery to expect that the ultimate processes of the universe should suspend their operations in our behalf.

Let us dispose also of the idea of a use for God as fighting our battles for us when victory for us means destruction for others. The only prayer we can offer then is for justice to be done and righteousness to be established with the further prayer that we shall have insight enough to recognize them if and when they do come, in spite of what may happen to our own destinies in the process.

Let us say also that whatever else God may be to us he must perform a real task. No trumped-up uses for God must be made. We are prepared to forget God if we find nothing real that holding to him will do for us. If there is no use for God that is worthy, he must retire as in *Green Pastures* Hez-drell said that old God of Israel had passed.

Have we then any use for a god? To many thoughtful people God is an answer to the question as to whether there is any sense to the universe. Is the universe a hodgepodge of nothingness, a tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury signifying nothing? Certain philosophies tell us to build a structure of faith on a foundation of unyielding despair. Is despair the only foundation this world can produce? It is one attitude that is found, but is it the noblest thing in the world? Faced with a choice between a mud hut and a brick house as a dwelling place, is there any compulsion



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for us to take the mud hut when the brick dwelling is available? Can anyone tough-minded or tender-minded find any permanent exhilarating happiness in a world in which nothing has any meaning? What a farce! A football game is predicted on the supposition that somebody can win. No one may win, but at least there is always the chance that somebody will make a field goal in the last quarter or break through the lines and make a touchdown. The spectators go to see a game. Why? Interest in seeing a football game? They can see football by watching practice for nothing. They go to a game and pay hundreds of thousands of dollars each year to see somebody win. The very reasonableness of life is at stake in a faith in God. There must be some unity in this world or we don't know where we are. In a world where nothing counts, we *are* lost. The struggle out of the jungle, the slow elimination of human slavery, the long, long effort to stop unreasoned slaughter of human beings in war, the patient toil of those who spend their lives devising ways to fight diseases—all these are nothing in a world that has no meaning. Some of us indeed are willing to spend our lives and be spent, toss them away in a cause that demands our all if at the last there comes sounding through the corridors of the soul the word—Well

done, thou good and faithful servant. Too many live with nothing big to live for. God, though we know only a little of his nature, does mean to us that there is some sense to the whole process of living, something to live for.

But the significant thing is what grows out of that unifying meaning. Man finding in God an answer to his question as to what it is all about discovers that he cannot remain untouched by such an imposing purpose. In other words, his response is to a commanding certitude, an authoritative voice that speaks to him. Isaiah in the temple says he saw the Lord high and lifted up, and a voice asked, Who will go on his mission? and Isaiah says, "Here am I; send me."<sup>2</sup> The test of any vision or meaning for life is what you are going to do about it. Micah comes to a view of righteousness in God and thunders that the response of man to God is righteousness—do justly, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. St. Francis of Assisi, convinced that God must be all in all and his own life the servant of the Most High, spends the rest of his days in devoted services to the poor and outcast of Europe. Lincoln, seeing the curse of slavery and believing himself to be an agent of God, must do something

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 6: 8.



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about the situation. The Emancipation Proclamation is the answer. The vision of life, of God, of truth, or of any great, exalting experience is meaningful only when it evokes people to do something about it. There is a great deal of racing the religious motor without the clutch being in. It is the kind of thing represented by the Master in his statement, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I command you?"<sup>3</sup>

I will confess that the first years I preached I emphasized what one had to do to live the Christian life. I then felt I was putting the cart before the horse. If people were to *do*, they must first have the vision of what it all meant without relation to what to do. Thus, I tried to create vision and have the rest the natural working out of the situation. I had made a mistake again. Whereas before I was trying to build a structure without drawing or plans as to what it might be, I was now trying to build a house with no building materials, only the architect's drawing. Neither was correct, useless each without the other. It was not vision *or* action, it was vision plus action. The use of a god is not only to supply meaning and unity to life but to lay upon us a commanding im-

<sup>3</sup> Luke 6: 46.

perative. The person who sees God honestly as giving meaning to life through personality cannot see personality crushed in the social machine without protest. One who believes God as co-operative goodwill cannot see nations racing madly in competitive armaments to destroy themselves without a real protest. Jesus said, "Do you not know that I *must* be about my Father's business?"<sup>4</sup> It is that moral *must* that God puts into a man's life. True enough there are many who want to live on the moral enthusiasm and ideals generated by those who had a conviction about life's supreme value, God. But the uses for God are indeed a meaning for existence and a response to that meaning in a certain kind of life.

Another use for God which most of us have is that we find in him tremendous resources of power. The language of religion is filled with references to such experiences. "The Lord is the strength of my life."<sup>5</sup> "I can do all things through Christ."<sup>6</sup> A new religion came into being in the nineteenth century because Christianity did not realize on the power that lay at its hands. Christian Science requires a severe elimination of reason. Nevertheless, there are values in it that are the possible values in

<sup>4</sup> Luke 2: 49.

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 27: 1.

<sup>6</sup> Philippians 4: 13.



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Christianity itself. If you knew of a person who had an account in a certain bank that was open and he needed the money and yet did not know it was there, you would feel sorry for him. There are many persons today going along on four cylinders of personal power when six cylinders and more are waiting to be utilized. In such a situation you project yourself forward by faith. There come times in your life and mine when there is nothing to do but wait and trust. Every act that we can do has been done. There are resources of power at our disposal to hold us up. The Empire State Building, highest in the world, rests on concrete piers that in turn rest on solid rock. The papers the other day reported case studies of certain New York psychiatrists who cured diseases coming on patients as a result of the depression and unemployment by getting them to join a radical political group. If political radicalism can cure disease, what might faith in the living God do? Last year in Denver a dam in a mountain creek gave way. The water rushed down the countryside with terrifying power. There is a power in the stream from the hills of God that, released and utilized, will turn power into many a life. There is an old story worth retelling. A man in England went into a railway station to inquire the time of the next train

to London. He was told that the last train had departed that night, but another would leave at ten o'clock in the morning. He made his way home to wait for the morrow. Not long after another man entered the station and asked the same question and received the same answer. He replied, "Order me a special train from your nearest junction, for I must be in London in the morning for an important cabinet meeting." He was on business for the king and the resources of the empire were at his disposal. Countless numbers have found that a relationship with the King of Life puts at their disposal the resources of the Empire of God.

Have you any use for a God? "My help cometh from God, who made heaven and earth."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Psalm 121: 2.



## CHAPTER FOUR

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### *The Secret of a Conquering Church*

BY CORDIE J. CULP<sup>1</sup>

In quietness and in confidence shall be your  
strength. Isaiah 30: 15.

SUCH words as these may mean little or nothing, or they may convey a great significance, according to the character and importance of the speaker and the time and circumstances surrounding their utterance. In fact, the value of most words depends upon the "who" and the "when." This speaker is one of the outstanding characters of all time. The centuries have scarcely produced a greater human leader in the moral and religious life of the world than the prophet Isaiah. Gifted with a marvelous insight into the ways of God and man, he came to possess a foresight that enabled him to speak for ages to follow.

The time was one of the most important eras in the recorded history of mankind—the eighth century before Christ. When the light of that

<sup>1</sup> For a biographical sketch of Cordie J. Culp, see p. 217.

century dawned, it fell upon two great civilizations—one lying along the stretches of the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers in eastern Asia, known as Assyria; the other, along the Nile in northern Africa, known as Egypt. These civilizations looked upon one another with fear and suspicion because both treasured in their hearts the dream of world dominion.

Between these civilizations lay a narrow strip of country peopled by some smaller nations. One of the most important was the Hebrews, occupying the little country that we now know as Palestine and offering the only way of travel and communication between Assyria and Egypt. To the Hebrews, the early years of the eighth century had brought abounding material prosperity in which both the northern and southern kingdoms shared; but, as so often happens, this era of material prosperity brought about a decline in the religious and moral life of both kingdoms. Humanity is never able to stand for a great length of time material welfare unless balanced by prosperity of the spirit. The reason is obvious. Material goods quicken the acquiring instinct which, in turn, feeds man's selfish nature—the enemy of all individual and social welfare.

About the middle of the eighth century, Assyria



began her drive toward Egypt and world domination. The northern kingdom made an alliance with Syria in an attempt to stay this advance, but failed, and Assyria went on her conquering way. The southern kingdom took alarm and the authorities assembled in Jerusalem to face the situation.

Four suggestions were made:<sup>2</sup> The military advocated resisting the advance of the enemy by strengthening the military forces. The commercial interests thought it better to buy off Assyria by paying tribute. The diplomats said the only thing to do was to make an alliance with Egypt, while the priestly party advocated prayer.

It seems at this gathering that the prophet Isaiah was present. He had the advantage of being born of an aristocratic family and grew up in the court of the kings of Judah, thus being quite familiar with the inner ways of official Jerusalem. To these four suggestions he made objection, pointing out that his nation, being small, was unable to offer any serious military opposition to the advance of the Assyrians. So far as the suggestion of the business men was concerned, Assyria could not be trusted. She would take the tribute, but treat any agreement as a scrap of paper. To make any alli-

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Harris E. Kirk: *The Consuming Fire*, pp. 68-73.

ance with Egypt would be folly. True, Egypt was seeking such an alliance, but only to make Judah a sort of an outpost to receive the first onslaught of the oncoming power. Egypt was a braggart who promised and never performed.

The suggestion of the priestly party sounded well, but the nation was not on praying terms with God. The people had exchanged the God of their fathers for the gods of their neighbors and under such conditions prayer would not avail.

The authorities then turned to Isaiah and asked what he had to offer. His reply was that there was but one thing to do and that was to turn to God in repentance, clean house, and enter into right relations with him. "In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength."

The suggestion was received with scorn and ridicule. The authorities said in substance: "We thought you would offer us a new plan, but you are only telling us old stuff. Do you think you are talking to little children? 'For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little.'"<sup>3</sup> But Isaiah was not daunted. He proceeded to give his reasons for his plan.

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 28: 10.



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First of all he believed that God had a purpose to work out with the Hebrew nation and that this purpose could not fail. Jerusalem, therefore, could not fall before the Assyrians, and if it ever did fall, God would find a remnant through whom he could accomplish his purpose.

Again Isaiah believed that God was holy, and to him holiness was an active principle, a dynamic of righteousness, a consuming fire that sweeps through the universe burning up everything that is unreal, and purifying what is true and good. Assyria would not stand the fire.

#### ISAIAH'S POSITION CONFIRMED

The subsequent years confirm this position of Isaiah. All the methods that he condemned were tried and failed. Assyria never took Jerusalem, but later on Babylon did.

But the purpose of God was not defeated. A remnant came back from the exile and established the Jewish people who were able in time to produce a woman good enough to become the mother of Jesus Christ and God's purpose was fulfilled.

How wonderfully did Jesus, in his life and work, illustrate Isaiah's principle, "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." He lived a quiet life for thirty years, during which time he

was storing up those vast energies which he poured out in the three and a half years of his public ministry, during which he moved forward with an amazing confidence.

### THE CONFIDENCE OF JESUS

There is no single characteristic of Jesus that is so arresting and stimulating as his assurance of the final success of his mission here upon the earth. Even as a boy of twelve he is found by his astonished parents in the Temple confidently interviewing the learned men of his time, and when his parents remonstrated with him he answered with a simplicity born of assurance: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" <sup>4</sup>

After the wave of popularity which attended the first years of his public ministry had subsided and he faced bitter opposition, his confidence only increased. To his disciples he said, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." <sup>5</sup>

Even when the cross had flung its shadow across his pathway and the great unspiritual world was clamoring for his death, he said to his disciples, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world," <sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Luke 2: 49.

<sup>5</sup> Luke 12: 32.

<sup>6</sup> John 16: 33.



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and contemplating the cross he cried, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself." <sup>7</sup>

At last he stood before Pilate who declared with impatience, "Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?" <sup>8</sup> And Pilate had the power. Back of him lay all the mighty forces of the Roman government. Jesus quietly gave answer, "Thou couldest have no power against me, except it were given thee from above." <sup>9</sup> Is it any wonder that this representative of the world power of the day trembled! Who could face quietness and confidence like that?

### THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

Now to his followers, Jesus committed a clear and definite task. It was to establish the Kingdom of God in the hearts of men and in the social order of which they are a part. This Kingdom he set forth in many ways and by many figures of speech. It is an all-inclusive Kingdom. It embraces within its boundaries every possible good for the individual and society.

The method by which the Kingdom was to come, Jesus also set forth. It is by the Church. Jesus

<sup>7</sup> John 12: 32.

<sup>8</sup> John 19: 10.

<sup>9</sup> John 19: 11.

did not conceive of the Church as an end in itself but as his instrument through which the Kingdom was to be founded and extended. Much was lost in the past when the Church was identified with the Kingdom. Now we are recognizing the true purpose of the Church in the world. This was indicated by Jesus the first time he mentioned the Church. He had taken his disciples to the northern part of the country for intensive training.

After inquiring as to what the judgment the public had formed of him, he put to them a direct question, "But who say ye that I am?"<sup>10</sup> Receiving the answer from Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," he said in substance, "Peter, you are the beginning of my Church. Someone else making a similar confession will stand by your side and still others and others, until the Church becomes a mighty force before which the fortresses of evil must go crashing down."

Evidently Jesus did not think of his Church so much as a fortress to be defended as an aggressive movement. In this he was in keeping with an arresting fact in human experience. Man has never been able to build a fortress which he could not destroy. His offensive powers are always greater than his defensive powers.

<sup>10</sup> Matthew 16: 15, 16.



## *The Secret of a Conquering Church*

### THE SECRET

But what is the secret of this conquering Church? Does it not lie in the method advocated by Isaiah and so wondrously illustrated in the life of Jesus himself? "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." These terms are related to one another by the principle of cause and effect. Out of quietness comes the confidence that produces the strength.

Is it not true that one of the great defects of life in this Western World is our over emphasis on activity? So much has the habit of action taken possession of us that we have lost the values of relaxation and quietude. The result of this state of things is evident in the physical sphere. Our sanatoriums for nervous disorders are crowded to the doors and our asylums for the insane are overflowing.

However, the effect in the spiritual realm is still more disastrous, for only in quiet are we able to sense the life-giving presence of God which substantiates his reality as well as floods our personality with spiritual power.

How some of our poets have realized all this and in the quietude of their own spirits have sensed God. Listen to Wordsworth:

*Cordie J. Culp*

And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something for more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And blue sky, and in the mind of man.<sup>11</sup>

Or Tennyson as he speaks out of his experience:

Speak to Him thou for He hears, and spirit with spirit can  
Meet—  
Closer is He than breathing and nearer than hands and  
feet.<sup>12</sup>

Or our own Harriet Beecher Stowe as she sings  
in the calm of the dawn:

Still, still with Thee, when purple morning breaketh,  
When the bird waketh, and the shadows flee;  
Fairer than the morning, lovelier than daylight,  
Dawns the sweet consciousness, I am with Thee.<sup>13</sup>

### THE CHALLENGE

A great challenge is confronting the Christian  
Church today to train and educate our people in

<sup>11</sup> "Lines" on revisiting the banks of the Wye.

<sup>12</sup> "Higher Pantheism."

<sup>13</sup> "When I Awake, I Am Still with Thee."



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a return to those more quiet ways in which must be found the real equipment to live. It may not be so much preaching and exhortation that are needed as some simple instruction as to method by which the spirit of man can come in vital contact with God as we know him in Jesus Christ.

If the defect of our times is this inability to avail ourselves of the benefits of quietude, surely one of the defects of the Protestant Church is lack of confidence. We do not move forward in a way that convinces the world of the reality of our faith and purpose. The sources of this confidence are the same for us as they were for Isaiah and for Jesus Christ.

First, a deep and abiding conviction that God has a purpose to be accomplished by the Christian Church and that this purpose cannot fail. We may fail him. Our country may fail him. Our times may fail him, but somewhere and sometime, he will find a people through whom he can establish his kingdom.

Second, a sure and steadfast belief that he is the God of holiness and that holiness is precisely what Isaiah saw and Jesus taught—a dynamic righteousness, a consuming fire moving through this universe consuming everything that is unreal and untrue and separating the dross from the pure metal,

Surely this is the teaching of history. Are not the shores of time strewn with the ashes of human opinions, devices, and institutions that have proven unreal and untrue? If it were not for this active principle at work, this old world would have gone to ruin long ago.

### OUR UNDEFEATED CAPTAIN

If we are lacking this confidence it must be that we are not following Jesus close enough. He is our undefeated captain and "He will not fail nor be discouraged."<sup>14</sup> He ever seeks to instil in his followers that same confidence that was the wonder of his life. Here is our first and greatest need—to catch anew his faith in the God of purpose and holiness and move forward with that assurance that God will fulfil himself through his Church.

One evening, just before his fatal illness, Robert Browning was reading to his sister the proof of the epilogue to "Asolando," the poem which was published on the day of his death. When he came to the third stanza he hesitated and said: "It almost looks like bragging to say this, and as if I ought to cancel it; but it's the simple truth; and as it's true, it shall stand." This is the verse:

<sup>14</sup> Isaiah 42: 4.



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One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,  
Never doubted clouds would break,  
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would  
triumph,  
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,  
Sleep to wake.<sup>15</sup>

This expresses the spirit of a great follower of Jesus Christ, who lived in an age when it was not easy to march "breast forward." It was his close contact with his Lord that gave him his marvelous confidence. It will be ours, too, when we enter into those quiet ways of worship and devotion where God and the human soul meet. It is from such chambers of the spirit that we go forth to work and serve in perfect confidence that God's Kingdom is coming and coming gloriously.

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun  
Does his successive journeys run;  
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,  
'Til moons shall wax and wane no more.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Browning: *Complete Poetical Works*, Cambridge Edition, p. 1007.

<sup>16</sup> Isaac Watts.

## CHAPTER FIVE

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### *A New Prophetic Order*

BY CHARLES STELZLE <sup>1</sup>

I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and  
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.

Joel 2: 28.

PRESIDENT GLENN FRANK once pointed out that there are four things we must do with our problems: first, we must see them; second, we must study them; third, we must state them; and fourth, we must solve them. And he added that the most difficult part of this task is not in solving our problems but in seeing them; for, he said, once a problem is seen, studied, and stated, there are usually dozens of experts readily available who can solve it.

This is unquestionably true in the field of engineering. The inventor who clearly saw what no one else had yet discovered is greater than the mechanic who, working from the set of blueprints which are based upon the inventor's genius, builds an intricate machine. In the practice of medicine,

<sup>1</sup> For a biographical sketch of Charles Stelzle, see p. 220.



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the diagnostician is considered the master mind, for after the nature of the disease has been determined, its treatment is fairly well standardized, so that the average physician can apply the remedy. In government those who make the greatest contribution to the nation's welfare are not the administrators but the political and economic seers.

Obviously, the function of the seer is not an easy task. It presents great difficulties, it involves great risks, and it sometimes carries with it great penalties. The man who is the first to see is usually called a fool or a fanatic. He is a disturber of the peace. The world has a fashion of first crucifying its prophets, and then, long afterward, of canonizing them—and it does not seem to make much difference whether the "seer" was active in the field of science, engineering, sociology, politics, or religion.

This is inevitable, because the world does not readily accept new ideas. The world has suffered—and lost—not because of the uprising of the "radicals" but because of the downsitting of the conservatives.

It should be borne in mind, however, that a man does not ordinarily reach the office of a prophet merely because of his ambition to become such. Indeed, the prophets of history had no thought of

being honored by such recognition, any more than the men who wrote the books of the Bible had any idea that what they had written would ultimately be given a place in the inspired record which today constitutes the Bible. Prophets and writers were burdened because of what they saw and felt, and the spirit which then possessed them urged them toward the accomplishment of some great mission or the writings of an inspired message. It became with them the driving force of a "Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel."<sup>2</sup> In other words, prophets and seers are not made to order. They usually are born out of "great tribulation."

There are certain principles which the prophet of today must keep in mind, especially if he is dealing with problems which have to do with human relationships. There is great danger that his emotions or his zeal or some other factor may sweep him off his feet. It is possible that his sources of information and general knowledge may be so meager that he may frustrate a perfectly sincere and commendable purpose and thus greatly limit his usefulness. There are certain well-defined factors or influences with which he should be familiar, because they have an important bearing upon modern movements.

<sup>2</sup> I Corinthians 9: 16.



## *A New Prophetic Order*

In the face of a complex, distracted world, no man can see clearly and speak with authority, unless he has a fairly definite knowledge of history. There is scarcely a single issue affecting the well-being of humanity but what has a well-authenticated historical background. Naturally the history of a movement or of an idea will have an extremely important bearing upon its present status and its future relationship to other movements and to the inbred thinking of the people. The more a prophet knows about the past, the better equipped he will be to foretell the future.

Another important factor is the influence of economics in the life of humanity. It may safely be said that every problem is basically economic, and while Socialists undoubtedly place too great an emphasis upon "economic determinism," there can be no doubt that the question of making a living has been a dominating influence throughout all history. "Give us this day our daily bread"<sup>3</sup> has been the universal cry of mankind since the beginning of time. It was the first petition in the prayer taught by Jesus to his disciples two thousand years ago. The fight for Bread has been the animating force back of the greatest struggles in history. The tramping of armies, the booming of

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 6: 11.

cannon, the pilgrimage of pioneers, the struggles of the workers, synchronize in a mighty staccato chorus of "Bread, Bread—Bread, Bread Bread!"

There is no more dominant theme in Scripture teaching than that of food—the satisfying of hunger. The profoundest scriptural truths are illustrated in the terms of Bread. Jesus himself declared that he was the "Bread of Life." But outside the tremendously significant teachings of the Bible, the story of Bread has come down through the centuries. It has irresistibly asserted itself when it was attempted to push other questions to the forefront. When the people were hungry, every other consideration—moral, ethical, religious, and patriotic—has been swept aside.

Another factor which must be considered is that of Personality. God evidently likes variety. He never made any two things exactly alike. This is certainly true of humanity. Aside from the general appearance and make-up of men, they differ even to the swirls at the points of their fingers, so that "finger prints" are an infallible guide in identification. There never was a greater heresy than the statement that "all men are created equal." The greatest injustice in the administration of law is the equal treatment of unequals.

But even when men are equally endowed in men-



tal and physical equipment, there is still the necessity for respect of Personality. God did not run all men through the same mental mold so that they all would be compelled to think alike. This principle also applies to their religious convictions. The attempt to force certain religious beliefs and practices upon humanity in various parts of the world has often resulted in bitterness and hatred instead of in love and brotherhood. Every man must work out his own salvation, even though it is done "with fear and trembling." In all these matters the true prophet will recognize the importance of Personality and will speak to men with infinite patience and understanding. It is significant that in these days of extreme nationalism, when governments are setting up dictatorships and other forms of controlling their citizens, the Church is practically the only institution which recognizes and respects the Personality and supremacy of the individual.

Still another element is an appreciation of the universality of religion. Just as every problem is fundamentally economic, so every problem is basically religious. Because of this fact, that prophet is greatest who is capable of interpreting life in the terms of religion. But it must be a religion which is undefiled by sectarianism or bigotry, it

must include all of humanity, and it must be applied to every act of a man's life.

It is generally assumed that the office of the prophet is limited to those whose function it is to preach or to teach. This was not the sole or primary purpose of this great office. In olden times men were "filled with the Holy Spirit" in order to equip them for some specific task quite apart from that of preaching. Bezalel was set apart by the spirit of God, not to become a great preacher but a first-class cabinetmaker, so that he might produce the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant with their equipment for the children of Israel as they sojourned in the desert. Nehemiah's anointing was given so that he might build the walls of Jerusalem. Samson was similarly endowed with power, so that he might fight the battles of the Israelites. Other men and women in history received special anointing for what would today be regarded as purely secular tasks, but the source of their power was the same as that which was given to the men who are recognized as the world's greatest prophets.

Unfortunately, in the course of time, it transpired that rulers in the ecclesiastical world arrogated to themselves a practical monopoly of the possession of the spirit of God. Even the accred-



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ited expression of "spirituality" was largely limited to those who could use the terminology of the ecclesiastics, such as was frequently used in the old-fashioned prayer meetings. The ordinary man, to whom the use of such language was unnatural, was presumed to lack the necessary elements of "spiritual-mindedness." The result has been that vast numbers of men and women who actually were deeply spiritual were robbed of their rightful heritage.

But a new day has dawned. The requirements of the times demand that a new prophetic order be established—an order which will include men and women from every class, from every occupation, from every social strata. This new day was prophesied by Joel, an ancient writer who, speaking for God, declared: "It shall come to pass . . . that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions." <sup>4</sup>

There has been periods in the world's history when conditions comparable to those existing today have prevailed. It was during these periods that new voices were heard, new leaders created, new programs carried out. But this is our day of re-

<sup>4</sup> Joel 2: 28.

sponsibility and opportunity. Out of the chaos and confusion of the world there will again be raised up those who can see with clear vision, those who will become the prophets of this generation.

We are living in a great industrial and commercial era. We can never go back to the simplicity of former times. Mass production, banking, big business, international relationships have created complex situations. The prophets of the new day will recognize these conditions. Much that they will present will be considered fanatical and impractical. It cannot be otherwise. They will meet with opposition from the exponents of the present order of things. This must be expected.

It does not necessarily follow that they will advocate a complete revolution in government, in business, and in social relationship. Whatever may follow will come as a natural consequence of the spirit of justice and brotherhood which they will promote. But we cannot ignore the fact that the world is on the verge of a great change in practically every phase of life. Old things have passed away. All things have become new.

This is a time when business may become life's greatest adventure. It is a day when the professions may be led into new forms of service. We are facing a situation which will give industrialists



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an unprecedented opportunity to create a better understanding and more human relationships. It is out of the ranks of the leaders in these fields that many of the prophets of the new day will emerge.

In former days the business man's highest aim was to make money so that he could serve the community through his wealth. In the future, the business man with the prophetic vision will serve the community through his business.

Why should it be thought impossible or unreasonable for a business man or an industrialist to throw himself into his task with the same devotion that others are doing in fields heretofore more closely related to humanity—men like Grenfell and Graham Taylor, women like Jane Addams and Lillian Wald? Leaders in business and commerce and industry may make even greater spiritual contributions than many of those who have become immortal because of their work in the older forms of service.

But the prophets of the new day will not be limited to those who are in a position to work out a complete social or economic program. As was said in the beginning, the most important individual in the task of meeting our problems is he who can see with clear vision. This does not necessarily involve a technical knowledge of industrial proc-

esses. To repeat: "Once a problem is seen, studied, and stated, there are usually dozens of experts readily available who can solve it." The prophets of the new day will consist of a higher order than those who are merely familiar with mass production, banking, or big business. To have had such experience should be a great advantage, although in many cases it might, for obvious reasons, prove to be a distinct handicap.

According to Joel, the spirit of God is to be poured out upon all flesh, not only upon the sons and daughters of the mighty, but "also upon the servants and upon the handmaids . . . will I pour out my spirit," <sup>5</sup> the prophet adds.

Such prophets need not wait for the ordination of any hierarchy or any other body which assumes to confer rank or position. When God calls a man for service he does not consult *Who's Who in America* nor any other list of notables who for various reasons have already achieved greatness.

What has been said regarding the fundamental principles which apply to the prophet who would make the most of his opportunity still applies to the man who would measure up as a leader in this direction. He should seek to the extent of his

<sup>5</sup> Joel 2: 29.



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ability to know the history of the problem he would solve, he must open-mindedly take into account the economic factors which are involved, he should honor the personality of those with whom and for whom he would serve, and, fundamentally, he must recall that basically his problem is shot through with religion.

And above all, he will deliver his own message in his own way. He will not be an echo of some other voice, nor yet of some other prophet. His message will be given to him directly by God himself. He will speak in his name. It is this which will give him the confidence of authority, and his power as a prophet will be in proportion to his faith. With this background, patiently and prayerfully acquired, men will recognize in him a prophet of God—one who is helping to bring in the new social order.

## CHAPTER SIX

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### *An Ancient Vision For Today*

BY FREDERICK W. CROPP, JR.<sup>1</sup>

Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, four horns. And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What be these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. And the Lord showed me four carpenters. Then said I, What come these to do? And he spake, saying, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head: but these are come to fray them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it.

Zechariah 1: 18-21.

**T**HIS is a parable—and a significant parable. What Zechariah meant remains a mystery; perhaps he had reference to the four world empires which had trampled the Hebrew children under foot and “scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem.” The four carpenters may have been the judgments of the Lord or four great leaders of the Hebrew nation. It may all have been a wistful dream. But it has its message for our day. Let us take this vision

<sup>1</sup> For a biographical sketch of Frederick W. Cropp, Jr., see p. 216.



of an ancient prophet and fit it into the life of our modern Church. We can surely discover four powers which seek the overthrow of the Church. And we ought to be able to see the "Carpenter" who can destroy the horn of worldly might and repair the Church. Out of this discussion may grow a method for combating evil which each one of us may use for his life.

### I. THE HORN OF INDIFFERENCE

If there is one lecture which impressed me above all others in my seminary days, it was the solemn assurance given us by an ancient sage that the greatest problem of our ministry would be the indifference of most people to our message. Of course there would be some opposition to the Gospel if we preached it in its purity; we must expect that. There would be some results from our preaching; we must expect that. But the appalling thing would be, we were told, that the great majority of those who heard us would be neither hot for the Gospel nor cold to its message; they would simply ignore it.

This is truth of the deepest sort. Anyone interested in the psychology of today may wonder at it, may examine this phenomenon—but it is true. What is true generally is true in particular. This

Church grows in numbers; that is no infallible sign that the Spirit of the living God has fired the hearts of these numbers. There may even be evidence to prove that these holy services, conducted week by week, have no lasting effect upon the lives of the worshipers. There is no widespread opposition to them; neither is there a glowing response to the appeal made here. When the Christ is held up in all of his glory, in his appealing humanity and his ageless divinity, there may be no throaty cry to crucify him—but neither do we hear the harmony of that great melody, “O come let us adore him!”

Merejkovsky, the Russian liberal who wrote *The Romance of Leonardo De Vinci*, has put the following sentiment in the mouth of Niccolo Machiavelli: “I maintain that men should either accept or reject Christ. We have done neither the one nor the other. We are neither Christians nor pagans. We have shoved off one shore, but have not beached on the other. To be righteous we have not sufficient strength; to be evil we are afraid. We are not white nor black—merely drab; not cold, not hot—merely tepid. We have lied ourselves out so, have grown so pusillanimous, shilly-shallying, limping with both legs between Christ and Belial, that now even we ourselves do not know what we want, whither we are going.” The truth



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of this accusation needs no further support. And the corollary is simply this: If the horn of indifference is allowed to grow great; if men and women enrolled as members of the Church are indifferent to the appeals of this ancient vehicle of saving truth, the end is not far distant. The death knell is sounded not so much by the enemy without the camp as it is by the sleeping inactive members within the camp. There can be no mistake. Indifference is a horn of destruction to the living Church.

But there is a carpenter standing ready to repair that horn. Emblazoned on his tool kit is the flaming word, Enthusiasm. Ever and again when the causes for which the Church has stood for ages were in peril has come a fresh burst of glowing zeal; the spirits of sleeping men have been quickened and the Church has been rebuilt by this carpenter called Enthusiasm.

His name means literally "God within" and is, therefore, symbolic of the nature of his reconstructive work. For we are firmly convinced that the lethargy of alleged church people comes about chiefly because they do not harbor in their hearts the Spirit of God—God himself. It is significant that the world's greatest example of a man who considered himself the temple of a God was given hemlock to drink. Socrates was certain that his

manner of life was governed by the "daemon" within him. Of course the Master, too, lived his life of unwavering enthusiasm because he knew himself to be the Revelation of God.

You and I can never expect this Church to fulfil her mission without the aid of the carpenter whose name is Enthusiasm. May we know more of his workmanship, especially if our faith is in danger of being rooted out by the dread horn of indifference.

## II. THE HORN OF ACTIVE OPPOSITION

Then there is a horn of active opposition to the Church and her way of life. On the face of the facts some might be tempted to deny this statement. But the events of the whirling Russian scene have completely demobilized the Christian soldiery. In Germany the Church has had to admit the supremacy of the State. Even in Catholic Italy the peace has been preserved by agreements which cannot perfectly please the hierarchy of the papal capitol. France, fertile ground as she has always been for any kind of revolt from Christianity, has not mended her ways since the War.

But in America the horn of actual opposition works in a most subtle way. There is no anti-church party here. So far as we are able to deter-



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mine, any association for the advancement of a revolt against the Church and her high ideals has never been very successful. Nor is it likely to be on account of the peculiarity of the attack. It is typical of the spirit of today that the Church is in danger of succumbing to the onslaught of unskilled and careless critics whose strongest argument is a laugh and whose greatest handicap is the unwillingness to see. With raucous hilarity, the population hurries past the door of the church on the way to their amusement, mocking with vacant laugh this timeless structure. The Church, her Bible, her Sabbath, her laws, her service, and sometimes even her Christ become the butt of ill-bred humor. You have only to check over in your own mind the humorous stories you know which center about these very things. Now this is serious—and much more alarming than a direct frontal attack. More power for harm hides in the empty laugh of ridicule than in the stinging whip of criticism. The noble enthusiasm of a new member of the Church can be dissipated by the smug smile of a scornful friend. Our tender hearts naturally wilt under such opposition. We are not magnifying molehills this morning. There is much evidence to support the view that the Church is in peril of being laughed out of the court by otherwise good

citizens. If you have seen the amused and self-satisfied smile on their countenances when the Church is mentioned, you may know what we mean.

Let us admit our folly. Let us confess that there have been many ludicrous mistakes made when men have forgotten or warped the true mission of the Church. There have been incongruous characters dressed up in comic opera style to minister to the aching hearts of men; an ecclesiastical language and demeanor have called down upon the Church only hearty laughter; certain aspects of formal Christianity have resembled grotesque masks and fancy costumes; the distortion of great truths to fit the mental capacity of narrow minds must look laughable. We confess all this but cannot bring ourselves to join very heartily in the ridicule. For we recall that with the Gospel expressed in its highest form, with God revealed perfectly in the form of his own Son, there was yet the hollow laugh of the obscene crowd. The crucifixion was finally carried through by a holiday mob, laughing and mocking the very Lord God himself. There is opposition of this sort abroad in this very age.

The opposition to the Gospel has doubled back upon the historical development of religious life in



another particular. In illogical but enthusiastic conviction there is a mighty host advising the Church about the sphere in which she must exercise her influence. The Church must keep out of politics. The Church must keep out of business. The Church must not interfere with society. In a sense we agree most heartily. Sermons devoted to party elections sadly miss the great truth of God's eternal election. Sermons which flay big business forget the real big business of the Gospel—the salvation of the souls of those who constitute the economic front of the business world. Sermons which concern themselves with the evils attendant upon the sins of the social order neglect the sins of the individuals in that social order. But the Church, on the other hand, must be vitally interested in life—the life especially of the community in which it stands. So long as there is vice and corruption in politics, in business, in society, the Church will continue to speak. But opposition will come. The horn of a direct attack will rear itself—and a carpenter will be needed.

There is a carpenter who can destroy this horn. His name is Loyalty—loyalty to the high ideals of the true Church. Let no one ridicule your church or any of the officers or services of the church. Defend them at all costs from the vacuous laughter

of the unregenerate mob. Let no man ridicule these holy ideals, this holy place, our holy Book. Be loyal—and the horn of opposition, the greatest opposition in this nation at least, will be destroyed. Loyalty to the Christ and to his ideals for his Church will remove the cause of the second line of attack. If all alleged Christians were truly aflame for the ideals of the Gospel, there would be no cause for sermons or Church Council deliverances upon matters of secular concern. The fear of the Lord would permeate the community, the ideals of the Kingdom would so influence the government, the spirit of the Church would so influence all society that the opposition would be swept back in terrific defeat.

The carpenter of loyalty can overcome the horn of active opposition.

### III. THE HORN OF CRASS IGNORANCE

The horn of base ignorance threatens the life of our Church. We mean, of course, ignorance of the spiritual or religious sort. Never was there more widespread secular learning or never was there less knowledge about the great and important facts of our faith. Time was when the adolescent child, by dint of catechetical study, parental persuasion, and careful instruction, was able to give a rather



thorough apologetic for the faith that was in him. Today few adults can give little more than a popular interpretation of the deep things of God. Theology is no longer the queen of sciences but less than a handmaiden to the other branches of learning. You and I never have discussed the plan of salvation, the blood atonement, the means of grace, the providences of God, the reasons for our reasonable faith, and the grounds for a consistent, workable, and highly satisfactory belief in a triune God. We ought to know of these things. If Christ's life, death, and resurrection are nothing more than a counterpart and perfecting of the plan and method of other religious teachers, why is so much stress laid upon him? He will some day be improved upon too!

We are ignorant of the creeds of Christendom, more especially of our own Church. I would not enjoy taking a census of this Presbyterian congregation to determine (1) how many of you own copies of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, (2) how many have read it, and (3) how many have read it within the past year. It is our hope that an ignorance of creeds and beliefs will not continue to be the fashion. There is a point at which the widening and broadening mind of the ordinary Christian becomes of no force in the

Christian Church. The horn of ignorance destroys the vitality of countless Christians. We need a Carpenter.

There is a carpenter whose name is Truth. He is able to dismantle the horn of ignorance with dispatch. Truth is the Christian's most effective weapon. Only a cowardly churchman need fear the revelations of science—for we follow in the footsteps of One who proclaimed himself the Truth. There need be no censoring of real truth. What the Church needs is not less truth but more. Ignorant leaders are a reproach upon the Gospel of the true God.

John Milton, arguing for the freedom of the press in ancient England, had a few things to say of this carpenter, Truth. He marveled at widespread ignorance among the Christian people—an ignorance of their own true religion which would nevertheless send them scurrying after some "new thought." "And in conclusion, it reflects to the disrepute of our ministers also, of whose labors we should hope better, and of the proficiency which their flock reaps by them, than that after all this light of the Gospel which is, and is to be, and all this continual preaching, they should be still frequented with such an unprincipled, unedified, and laic rabble, as that the whiff of every new pam-



phlet should stagger them out of their catechism and Christian walking.”<sup>2</sup>

But Truth will win, if given a chance! “And though all the winds of doctrine were let loose to play upon the earth, so Truth be in the field, we do injuriously by licensing and prohibiting to misdoubt her strength. Let her and Falsehood grapple; who ever knew Truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter? Her confuting is the best and surest suppressing. He who hears what praying there is for light and clearer knowledge to be sent down among us would think of other matters to be constituted beyond the discipline of Geneva, framed and fabricked already to our hands.”

“For who knows not that Truth is strong, next to the Almighty; she needs no policies, no stratagems, nor licensings to make her victorious; those are the shifts and the defences that error uses against her power: give her but room, and do not bind her when she sleeps, for then she speaks not true, as the old Proteus did, who spake oracles only when he was caught and bound, but then rather she turns herself into all shapes, except her own, and perhaps tunes her voice according to the time, as Micaiah did before Ahab, until she be adjured into her own likeness.”

<sup>2</sup> *Arcopagitica*.

*Frederick W. Cropp, Jr.*

Bring Carpenter Truth to the platform, the pulpit, the stage, and the screen today—and the Church will know the greatest period of growth in her history. Ignorance is a destructive, deathly horn; truth is a healing, helping balm.

#### IV. THE HORN OF SIN

The fourth horn which threatens to destroy the Church is hard to name in the presence of a good and loyal group of Christians. It is a sharp little word, condemned to the limbo of archaic ideas once so potent in the thought of the race. The horn that threatens to destroy the effective influence of the Church is sin. We would be false to the eternal truth if we did not mention this fact frequently. There is need for a continual drumming upon this staccato word until the consciences of church people are aroused. So long as sin is present, the very foundations of the Church are endangered. For, talk as we may about the Church as a group of sinners seeking salvation, the fact remains as history's warning—the Kingdom goes forward upon the energy of redeemed saints.

Let us not minimize the presence of or the effect of this disease. Nor should we fail to recall that the sin that weakens the Church is not so often the misdeeds of unregenerate society but the evil



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done by alleged Christians. The great carnal or "deadly" sins lost their prestige as foremost in their field under the keen eye of our Master. He saw hatred in the eyes of man and labeled it murder; he saw envy and called it robbery; he saw evil desire and named it adultery; he gave prominence to the inner life, whether it be good or bad. "As a man thinketh in his heart"<sup>3</sup> was the criterion of real sin.

Here we all fail; saint and sinner alike have "come short of the glory of God."<sup>4</sup> "All we like sheep have gone astray."<sup>5</sup> If we will honestly examine the motives which actuate our daily lives, we shall be struck deeply by an emotion which troubles man but infrequently today—a sense of sin. Far from being what psychologists warn us of—an unhealthy frame of mind, this discovery is the first sign of spiritual insight. We have rightly diagnosed our own trouble and incidentally discovered the fourth dangerous horn of the Church when we admit our sin and confess that "there is no help for us."

But here is the place for the Carpenter—the young Messiah who stands in his shop door and proclaims himself the Savior of men. How we all

<sup>3</sup> Proverbs 23: 7.

<sup>4</sup> Romans 3: 23.

<sup>5</sup> Isaiah 53: 6.

need him! Especially in our sin we need him. He can destroy these other opposing forces—but his mission is first to convict the world of sin and then to save us from that sin.

You ask how this may be done. Volumes have been written, myriads of sermons preached. We can but say, simply—as simply as the language can express it—that the Carpenter one day walked out of his shop to minister to men and women and because he saw truth accurately and proclaimed it, because also his Father had need of an infinite sacrifice to atone for the infinite distance which our sin separates us from God, he was crucified, dead, and buried. Because the cross was his final service we are able to destroy the horn of sin—in our own lives and in the life of the living Church. Here is a mystery; we can but phrase it in the ancient words—"For Christ also hath once suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit."<sup>6</sup>

And so long as the cross towers over the wrecks of Time, those wrecks will not contain the Church which he established. All hail to the Carpenter!

There are doubtless other horns which threaten

<sup>6</sup> I Peter 3: 18.



the Church; there are certainly other constructive forces to save the Church. But Zechariah has indicated four which threaten the future of God's people and four which give hope. Our prayer is that the horn of indifference may be replaced by the indwelling God; that the horn of opposition may be superseded by a glowing loyalty; that the horn of ignorance may give way to the enlightening power of the truth; and that the foul horn of sin may be forever destroyed by the divine Carpenter of Galilee.

God grant that his Church may march on in the power of the great Builder and Architect—the Carpenter Christ.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

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### *The Margin of Goodness*<sup>1</sup>

BY W. O. CARRINGTON<sup>2</sup>

For I tell you, unless your goodness excels  
that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never  
get into the Realm of heaven.

Matthew 5: 20 (Moffatt).

A BRILLIANT and engaging essayist confesses his love of margins and thinks he must have derived it from Nature who goes in for them on a truly stupendous scale. "She wants a bird, so a dozen are hatched. She knows perfectly well that eleven out of the twelve are mere margin. . . . She wants a tree, so she plants a hundred. She knows that ninety and nine are margin, to be browsed down by cattle, but she means to make sure of her one."<sup>3</sup> Tennyson says,

of fifty seeds  
She often brings but one to bear.

<sup>1</sup> This sermon was awarded the prize of one hundred dollars.

<sup>2</sup> For a biographical sketch of W. O. Carrington, see p. 213.

<sup>3</sup> F. W. Boreham: *Mushrooms on the Moor*. Used by permission of The Abingdon Press.



Most of us, I am sure, are ready to subscribe to the doctrine of the utility of the margin not only in Nature, but in such matters as health, money, knowledge, and time. We do not usually make the application elastic enough, however, to embrace goodness. We do not think of connecting the doctrine of the margin with morals. We do not believe in extra goodness, do not give attention to building up any reserve here. We soon think we are good enough, especially if we compare favorably with others. If we can say with the accent of truth, "I am no worse than Mr. A or Mrs. B," or, "I am as good as the average," we are perfectly complacent; and if by any chance we find warrant for the conviction that we are better than the average, we think, forsooth, that there is abundant reason for self-congratulation.

Our main trouble here is that we are content with being just good enough. One might reasonably suppose that we deemed it a vice to cultivate an excess of goodness. We sometimes say of certain people that they live from hand to mouth. What comes in through one hand goes out immediately through the other. They have nothing to fall back on in some hour of special need, for they lay up nothing, create no reserve, allow no margin beyond the present necessity. That is how many

are content to live in the realm of morals: from hand to mouth. They accumulate no reserve of goodness; they possess no margin of righteousness; they manage to get along with a minimum of religion. Marivaux not only packs a deal of philosophy into a brief epigram but gets to the heart of the matter when he says, "In this world it is necessary to be a little too good to be good enough."

## I

Jesus, it will be recalled, was ever insisting on this extra goodness. "For I tell you, unless your goodness excels that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the Realm of heaven." The scribes and Pharisees represented the good people of Christ's day. It has been said that when he denounced them "it was as if he were denouncing wardens and vestrymen, deacons and elders, trustees and class leaders in church today." It is quite obvious that he did not think much of their goodness. It lacked depth and breadth; it was minimum goodness, with no overflow, no margin. Christ insists on more and better goodness. "If ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others?



do not even the Gentiles the same?"<sup>4</sup> Here is average goodness, and Christ depreciates it. He hates mediocrity in religion; is intolerant of tepid and commonplace moralities; has no use for frayed and flimsy respectabilities.

The goodness of the scribes and Pharisees was mostly negative. It consisted chiefly of refraining from doing wrong. The laws they strove to fulfil concerned themselves largely with prohibitions: "Thou shalt not do this" and "Thou shalt not do that." And there are people who still glory in that sort of goodness, whereas their positive goodness, to borrow a phrase from Hamlet, "could be bounded in a nutshell." Righteousness according to law does not go far enough." It is at best a poor make-shift, pitifully narrow and inadequate. "To Christ the law is always a limitation upon righteousness. It is meant to be a minimum; and men suppose it to be a maximum. So he gives his examples of the law and then of the manner in which it ought to be surpassed. And in all of these there is a kind of extravagance. . . . What Christ offers to man is the inexorable freedom of his own spiritual growth, instead of the rule of law."<sup>5</sup> "What do ye more

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 5: 46.

<sup>5</sup> A. Clutton-Brock: *Studies in Christianity*. E. P. Dutton & Co., New York.

than others?"<sup>6</sup> He demands something extra; he pleads for a margin of goodness. "If any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain."<sup>7</sup> That is Christ's striking demand that goodness overflow into good will; his unique and startling statement of the doctrine of the margin as it should work out in character.

Today, as of old, Christ looks at our prim respectability, our skimped goodness, our law-regulated righteousness, and says that will never do. In *Daniel Deronda* Herr Klesmer criticized Gwen-dolen's singing, saying that it expressed "the passion and thought of people without any breath of horizon . . . no sense of the universal. It makes men small as they listen to it. Sing now something larger."<sup>8</sup> Christ feels like that about much of our goodness. If we are to be the children of our heavenly Father there must be something "dynamically distinctive" about our goodness; we must capture something of his large graciousness, emulate the impartial prodigality of his goodness, exemplify within the limits of our finite powers the uncalculating excess of his overflowing love, striving incessantly

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 5: 47.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 5: 41.

<sup>8</sup> George Eliot: *Daniel Deronda*. A. L. Burt Co., New York.



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to be perfect as he is perfect. Such goodness would invade certain restricted areas of life and bear fruit in understanding, tolerance, and brotherhood.

## II

The margin of goodness vindicates itself abundantly in life's testing hours. Moralists insist that the times of crisis in our lives constitute the supreme test of character, and they are right. The goodness that counts must not only be sufficient for the wear and tear of everyday living, must not only see us through the uneventful stretches and ordinary occasions of life, but must be adequate for the crises, garrisoning our hearts to withstand the shock of sudden assault, girding us with power for unexpected demands, releasing undreamed-of resources in answer to some desperate emergency. It must be goodness with a plus, goodness which—according to Walter Lippmann—"is victorious vitality." Years ago Professor Seeley said, "No heart is pure that is not passionate; no virtue is safe that is not enthusiastic."<sup>9</sup> Jesus would have us know that goodness which is moderate, which conforms to a conventional type, which strikes a common average, is not good enough; it lacks the passion,

<sup>9</sup> John R. Seeley: *Ecce Homo*. Roberts Brothers, Boston. 1867.

the enthusiasm, the intensity, the something extra which would make it reliable, capable, triumphant. In the familiar legend about William Tell, after the hero had hit the apple on his son's head, Gessler observed that he had another arrow and asked, "What would you have done with that?" "Shot you if I had killed my child." Sir W. Robertson Nicoll says, "It was because Tell had a second arrow that he was able to send the first straight to its mark. In other words, the second arrow is the margin and his feat shows the value of a margin."<sup>10</sup> The margin of goodness does something like that for us: it carries us safely through the crisis.

In the construction of a bridge engineers ascertain the amount of strain it can stand, and the maximum burden of traffic which it ought to bear at any time is set considerably below that point, the difference being the margin of safety. The lack of such margin invites disaster. Many a fight with death has been lost for want of the merest margin of vitality, of physical stamina. So what Stevenson calls "the lost fight of virtue" is often due to the lack of margin. This accounts for many of the saddest moral catastrophes which have overtaken men through the ages. As long as we are

<sup>10</sup> Sir W. Robertson Nicoll: *The Day Book of Claudius Clear*. George H. Doran Co., New York.



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satisfied to barely live within the law, to keep fairly within the bounds of conventional morality, to "get by" with the minimum of goodness, we shall be exposed to these moral breakdowns when some crisis surprises us. If we store up no reserve fund of moral force, accumulate no margin of goodness, we are likely to collapse under undue pressure, to be overwhelmed by the severity of our trial.

Oh, the little more, and how much it is!  
And the little less, and what worlds away!<sup>11</sup>

The difference between the little more and the little less, be it ever so trifling, is often the difference between life and death, success and failure; has in it the making of tragedy or the averting of it. In *The Intellectual Life* Hammerton points out that there are situations like that of a steamer with a storm-wind directly against her and a rock-bound coast behind. If she can advance but an inch in an hour she is safe, but if she lose, her case is hopeless. Dr. Henry Howard relates a striking incident which illustrates the truth of this.<sup>12</sup> Some years ago several vessels, including some German war-

<sup>11</sup> Robert Browning: "By the Fireside."

<sup>12</sup> Henry Howard: *The Beauty of Strength*. Harper & Bros., New York.

ships and an English man-of-war, the "Calliope," were anchored in the harbor of Samoa. A sudden storm broke and the ships tried to put out to sea for safety. Before the German ships could get under way they were dashed upon the rocks. But the "Calliope" stood with her prow against the tempest, measuring her splendid strength against its terrific force, "with her pistons plunging, and her screws whirring and all her pulses throbbing as if her heart would break with the strain. For a full hour she kept this up without moving an inch forward, but she never moved back! . . . . Then gradually she forged ahead just a shade, then a little more, till by and by she steamed victoriously out." Just so, it is the extra goodness that counts in times of moral crisis.

Shakespeare was wont to say quite truly that

extremity was the trier of spirits;  
That common chances common men could bear;  
That, when the sea was calm, all boats alike  
Show'd mastership in floating.

The real test comes in storm and stress. Then only the stout ship—and the stout soul with a fine margin of goodness—can withstand the fury of the tempest's wrath. No moderate goodness could



have preserved its chastity in Potiphar's house. No average goodness could have remained loyal to its ideals in spite of fiery furnace and lions' den. No superficial goodness could have blossomed into saintship in Caesar's household. No conventional goodness could have returned in triumph and in power of the Spirit from the wilderness of the temptation.

### III

One of the most urgent needs of the hour is goodness that is attractive, and it is the margin, the something extra, which contributes immensely to this attractiveness. Goodness has been having a bad time lately in our world. One would think there is a conspiracy against it. Novels, plays, and movies, new psychologies, flippant philosophies, and debunking biographies seem to have set themselves to cheapen goodness, to belittle the simple decencies, to make us ashamed of our idealism. They have glorified evil, enthroned license, and covered lawlessness with the glamor of romance. But perhaps goodness has suffered more at the hands of its avowed friends than of its acknowledged enemies. There are good people whose lives do not commend goodness, do not make it attractive; people who, as was said of Bernard Shaw, have "in an unrivaled

degree the gift of being unpleasant." All of us can recall cases where goodness was rendered not only ineffective but mischievous; where good people cut so poor a figure that others have said, "If that is goodness, away with it! I will have none of it." What Samuel Johnson said about truth might be said quite pertinently about goodness: "Those who profess the most zealous adherence to truth are forced to admit that she owes part of her charms to her ornaments; and loses much of her power over the soul when she appears disgraced by a dress uncouth or ill-adjusted." Others are content with goodness in such moderation that it becomes tame, colorless, and futile. Their attitude toward goodness is the Laodicean temper which is never in danger of running into excess. They would whittle goodness down to a respectable mediocrity. What was said of the late Charles Sylvester Horne could never be said of them. It is related that after a conversation with him an American journalist exclaimed with wonder and amazement, "That man carries Christianity to excess."

Moderate Christianity is hardly real Christianity, for as Brierley says,<sup>13</sup> in the Gospels everything is

<sup>13</sup> J. Brierley: *Aspects of the Spiritual*. The Pilgrim Press, Boston.



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stretched beyond the average; Christianity is the religion of the extremes. Goodness remains ineffectual, fails of its legitimate influence, until it goes to the moral extreme. There was something so positive, so striking, so aggressively attractive about goodness of the early Christians that men took knowledge of it, were impressed, fascinated, captivated by it. And wherever that sort of goodness overflows in radiant energy, in winsome influence, in adventures in godlikeness, men yield to its spell. William of Saint Thierry saw it when he visited Bernard of Clairveaux and, marveling, thought he saw a new heaven and a new earth. Stanley saw it in Livingstone and was transformed thereby. The wife of a dying laborer perceived it in Henry Drummond and importuned him to come to her home one Saturday night that her husband might get a breath of Drummond about him before he died. The people of Boston recognized it in Phillips Brooks from whom it went forth in gracious benediction. Mrs. Browning felt its subtle charm in the presence of Charles Kingsley and asked the secret of his beautiful life.

It is only when goodness ceases to be pinched and narrow, unlovely and forbidding, breaks over the bounds of convention, exceeds the bare requirements of the law, accepts the challenge of the sec-

ond mile, experiences the thrill of giving up cloak as well as coat, that it becomes triumphantly attractive, beneficently ministrant, redemptively powerful. We sometimes question how we may recover the evangelistic passion and power of the early Church, how we may make our witness more convincing and compelling, how we may secure a more adequate technique of social progress. It seems to me that a large part of the answer will be found in lives that possess this abounding goodness, adventurous in its spirit, haunting in its unworldly quality, captivating in its godlikeness. Let us make this growing and contagious goodness incarnate in our lives and we shall release forces of ethical renewal within our present social order which will make its desert places rejoice and blossom as the rose; and we shall not only find abundant entrance into the kingdom of heaven but become mighty builders of that kingdom which is "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Romans 14: 17.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

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### *The Continuity of the Divine Presence*

BY FRANK FITT <sup>1</sup>

Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end  
of the world. Matthew 28: 20.

THAT verse has a very deep personal association. Every Sunday morning for years my father read aloud in the family circle the last chapter in Matthew's Gospel which ends with this assurance of the continuity of the Divine Presence. As a small boy this was my most familiar passage of Scripture with the exception of the Lord's Prayer and the Twenty-third Psalm. To my mind in those distant days of childhood it seemed a very comforting and fortifying truth that this assurance could be ours, that no matter where we went or what we did we were never beyond the reach of him who disclosed himself on that first Easter morning to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary and the intimate friends of his ministry. It seemed so inspiring that we could have him as they had him. Many years have passed since then. Many

<sup>1</sup> For a biographical sketch of Frank Fitt, see p. 218.

experiences have been encountered, some of them helpful and enriching and some of them otherwise. A much greater knowledge of myself and my fellows and the world is available for me now than when I heard Matthew's last chapter read so frequently that I could repeat it by heart. What has happened to my faith in that assurance? Do I still think that we can have him as they had him? Of course I do. The years have confirmed and deepened the childhood trust. My conception is the same and yet not the same, for it has grown and changed and enlarged with the years. I hope that it will never cease to change and grow. It always means a thrill of all one's being when one becomes aware of some new channel of revelation by which Christ is appreciated as a Living Power and Presence.

Let me indicate a few of the ways in which I believe this assurance in the last verse of Matthew's Gospel is fulfilled today. No one could indicate all the ways, for no one knows what is going on in the spiritual experience of all those who feel a kinship with the Eternal. We gain our knowledge out of our own spiritual striving and the similar striving of others as they reveal it. Out of what has been made available for me I am aware of at least three phases of experience in which the assur-



ance of the Risen Christ can be very real for us.

The first of these phases I am all the more anxious to emphasize because it has never entered my own life. It seems to be a phase reserved only for those who possess a highly mystical nature, who combine an exquisitely attuned sensitiveness with a deep spiritual trust. I refer to the relatively few men and women who apparently have had an experience of the same baffling but unmistakable type as that which was vouchsafed to the restricted group in the New Testament who saw Christ after he had risen from the tomb. It is possible to dismiss all this in terms of hysteria and hallucination, of course, and I have no doubt that many alleged experiences of this sort should be so dismissed as unworthy of serious consideration. But one has only to possess a slight acquaintance with the story of the saints and mystics to know that there are outstanding cases here and there throughout the centuries which fulfil in a very literal and realistic sense the promise in the last sentence of Matthew's Gospel.

Catherine of Siena lived in the fourteenth century and is enrolled among the official saints of the Roman Catholic Church. She was not a full member of any religious order, but held subordinate rank in the Order of St. Dominic. She died at

thirty-three, but she accomplished work in both the political and religious spheres which remains the marvel of the students of her time. The motivating experience in her life was a vision in which she saw a majestic throne. Seated on this throne was our Lord wearing magnificent robes and extending his hand in blessing.

Saint Teresa of Cepeda lived through most of the years of the sixteenth century and had a very busy career founding Carmelite convents. She had several very profound mystical visions. The late Bishop Gore considered that her life in this respect offered an unusual field for study. The famous nun was by no means a neurotic. A modern biographer has this to say of her: "No one born was less hysterical than Teresa. Her life was calm, orderly, full of discipline; her actions free from precipitation and haste; her mind clear, shrewd, and sharp. And this same clearness, sharpness, shrewdness, is as discernible in her relation of a vision as in her narrative of the foundation of a convent."

To find this phase, however, we are by no means limited to the Roman Catholic Church in the medieval period. We can find it among Protestants living today.

Sadhu Sundar Singh was a Christian saint in modern India. Canon Streeter has written his



biography and adds his testimony to the many observers who have told us of the remarkable spiritual qualities which the Sadhu possessed. His Christian experience began with his conversion at the age of fifteen. He was passing through a period of inner turmoil at the time and decided to commit suicide by thrusting himself the next morning under the wheels of an express train which whizzed past his dwelling at five o'clock. He arose at three o'clock, took a cold bath, and waited for suicide. Suddenly a light surrounded him. Then a Figure appeared in the light. Then the Figure appealed to the lad, asking for his dedication of himself.

C. F. Andrews for some years has been one of the confidential advisers of Gandhi. He went to India originally as an Anglican missionary, but is now no longer affiliated with any Christian body. No one who reads his writings could fail to appreciate his deep-seated Christian faith. Andrews has had some spiritual experiences akin to those already mentioned. The most notable of these was in connection with the indentured labor system in Fiji. The call came to him to go to Fiji to work for its abolition. He saw a vision of a black laborer who had been lashed by an overseer. As he looked the black man's face changed into the face of Christ.

Andrews went to Fiji and helped to abolish indentured labor.

After eight years on the mission field E. Stanley Jones had brought himself into a serious condition of nervous collapse. Feeling utterly helpless he knelt in prayer and a Voice seemed to say, "Are you yourself ready for this work to which I have called you?" He answered, "No, Lord, I am done for. I have reached the end of my rope." The Voice replied, "If you will turn that over to Me and not worry about it I will take care of it." He quickly answered, "Lord, I close the bargain right here." Since then E. Stanley Jones has carried on a much more responsible ministry without physical mishap.

Many instances of this type might be given. Such evidence can hardly be dismissed as being neurotic or unwholesome. To a limited number of men and women characterized by a rare and unusual temperament there seems to have come as real an impression of the Abiding Presence as came to those in the New Testament who testified of the post-crucifixion appearances of our Lord. I am more inclined to give emphasis to this phase now than formerly, for the shift of our increasing knowledge in several directions has broken down the force of objections which once seemed formid-



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able. The question of whether such visions are objective or subjective, for example, no longer seems important. I am all the more anxious to be sympathetic to this phase for the reason that thus far in my own experience I have had no happenings that could be classified in this fashion.

The second phase which fulfils Christ's promise that he would be with us always is found in a type of experience by no means as uncommon as that to which I have just alluded. While I believe that there have been and are today specially endowed Christian men and women who have seen a vision of Christ or heard his Voice in a sense that was very real for them and that had a profound influence upon them, I am sure there are few, if any, of us who could include ourselves in their company. I have no doubt, however, that a number of us have known the second phase of fulfilment. What is this second phase? Let me answer that question by asking another. Have you ever found yourself in a position in which you seemed to be under the influence of a strange compulsion which you felt you could neither analyze nor defy without personal peril? You obeyed that compulsion and because of later events you were able to identify it as the Will of God directing your life and deeply enriching it. Sometime ago a friend of mine came

to a parting of the ways which involved his career and the careers of those dependent upon him. All the logic of the situation pointed one way. The strange compulsion, coming in answer to the prayer for guidance, pointed the other way. In the strain of the contradiction my friend suffered in a manner which he had not known before. He obeyed the compulsion which seemed to come as a result of his prayer and the sequence of events since then has indicated to him that he obeyed the Will of God. Furthermore, while always a Christian believer, this experience enhanced his sense of the reality of the Divine as a Personal Power in the lives of men and women and has also increased the confidence of his own witness.

An experience of that type is by no means rare. Naturally we do not seek to give publicity to such experiences. Perhaps the most we do, if we do not remain completely silent about them, is to confide them only to a few intimate friends or to some small company of fellow-believers. Such experiences are too precious and revealing for general publicity. Almost always they have meant a deep pain of soul, a severe self-discipline and an increased range of discipleship. If the testimony is to be given we prefer to give it indirectly in terms of our added usefulness in the Kingdom. This phase of



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fulfilment is difficult to describe, but in any gathering of Christian people a number will recognize this phase in their own spiritual background. Let me quickly add that I do not consider this phase to be an essential accompaniment of the Christian life. It is quite possible to be a faithful witness without knowing anything of this strange compulsion of the Spirit of God which presses upon one at times. I am thinking especially of those who have very orderly and systematic natures, who always know at nine o'clock in the morning where they will be and what they will be doing at four o'clock in the afternoon, who live by system and habit and have accustomed themselves to the steady demand of a disciplined life. Undoubtedly these people will know the third phase of the fulfilment of Christ's promise to abide with us. What is this third phase?

It is that phase in which we identify the Divine Presence in all the happy, wholesome, normal accompaniments of daily living: in the joys of family life, in the satisfaction of work, in the inspiration of friendship, in the delight of reading, in the appreciation of art, in the meaning of beauty as it is revealed in Nature. There are many people who have never seen a vision or heard a voice, who have never known what it is to have a special prompting

of soul which could be disobeyed only at the cost of personal disaster, for whom the daily round is always a sacramental matter. The touch of the Divine is never absent from their day. From the time they get up in the morning until they go to bed at night they encounter a great deal which wears the halo of a sacred association. It is not that they fail to see the seamy side of things. It is not that they are merely blissful and superficial optimists who wear rose-colored spectacles. It is, rather, that recognizing all the ugliness and filth and sin they also recognize the beauty and moral grandeur and find God disclosing himself in the latter. Presumably such men and women have their dark and doubting moments. If so, the momentum of what they are has carried them triumphantly through such crises, for in public and in private as we know them they always wear the helmet of salvation and bear the shield of faith and carry the sword of the Spirit in their right hands. Those men and women mean a great deal to us all as we come to know them. Surely they are just as worthy as those who have seen the Vision and heard the Voice in the rare, unusual sense!

These three phases, I am sure, by no means include all the phases of experience in which we may become aware of the Divine in life. But of these



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three phases I can speak with certainty because of what I have seen and heard and felt. Not all three phases may be possible for us all; but at least one of those phases may be ours. And if we cannot claim even one of those phases, if we are plagued constantly by the seeming unreality of the spiritual life, we have had flashings of intuition and moments of insight when we have known that some, at least, of these phases were true. Such promptings of light and gladness can be developed as we make our moods receptive to Christ's Abiding Presence. Our natures can grow in this direction as in other directions and as the years lengthen we become more sure of the promise in the last verse of Matthew's Gospel, finding the Divine where before we had missed it, discovering the spiritual in unlikely places and having our vision intensified so that the halo surrounds much that enters into our daily lot. The gift of grace which all of us should earnestly desire as Christians is that from day to day and year to year we shall behold more clearly the Divine Presence.

## CHAPTER NINE

### *Trails of Life*

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BY NEIL CRAWFORD <sup>1</sup>

LUKE 12: 13-34

JESUS is revisiting the scene of his former labors, the villages near Capernaum. A great crowd follows him, and he teaches them. His heart yearns for a response to his last appeal. He warns his hearers against hypocrisy, encouraging an honest, open conduct, for all things are open to the eyes of God. He exhorts them, "Be not afraid of them which kill the body, and after that have no more which they can do. But I will warn you whom ye shall fear. Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into Hell."<sup>2</sup> But not only should they stand in awe of the Being who is infinite in power, they should trust also in the providential care of him who attends the falling of a sparrow, and who numbers the hairs of our heads. He insists also upon the importance of confessing him before men, attaching to it the promise that he

<sup>1</sup> For a biographical sketch of Neil Crawford, see p. 216.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 10: 28.



will acknowledge them as his own in heaven. While, on the other hand, those who deny him before men, he will deny before God. He warns them to speak no word against the Holy Spirit, for it can never be forgiven. On the other hand he promises that those who accept him need have no fear, when accused falsely in this world, and brought before the rulers of earth. The Holy Spirit will tell them what to say.

Jesus is striking the richest notes of human thought and experience—sincerity, judgment, God's providential love. In the midst of this comes the demand, "Master, make my brother divide the inheritance with me."<sup>3</sup> How mean that looks in the light of the themes of Jesus' discussion. It is like a crash of jazz in the midst of grand opera. Jesus is pained. His answer shows it. The terms of address, "Man," is one of coldness, some say of contempt. "Man, who made me a judge and divider over you?"<sup>4</sup> This answer is all the more cutting, when you consider that the man thinks he is paying Jesus a compliment. The rabbis of the synagogues handle such affairs. But this man thinks Jesus a greater rabbi than those at the synagogues, and asks him to settle the estate. He shows

<sup>3</sup> Luke 12: 13.

<sup>4</sup> Luke 12: 14.

that he has no understanding of Jesus' mission on earth. But is that surprising, when even his disciples are so far from understanding him? In spirit Jesus answers what he later proclaimed before Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this earth."<sup>5</sup>

Are we to infer then that Jesus is not interested in social and economic questions? Has he nothing to say about injustice? Does he forfeit the right and abandon the duty of ruling over the wide field of conduct concerned with wealth? Are we to infer that Jesus has nothing to say about a rich nation, which suffers a million children of school age to work in factories and farms? God forbid! Jesus simply passes over this family squabble in order to get to the underlying principles. Jesus is not the kind of workman who cuts weeds off at the top of the ground. When he faces sin, he digs it up by the roots, and shows people the cause of the trouble. He digs sin up, taproot and all, and lets the sunlight of God's truth destroy it. So in this case. Jesus sets forth the real trouble. Turning to the crowd, he says, "Look at this man and beware of all covetousness."<sup>6</sup> But covetousness is just the weed above the ground. What is its root?

<sup>5</sup> John 18: 36.

<sup>6</sup> Luke 12: 15.



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Jesus reveals the root of the evil in the parable of the rich farmer. He first set forth a text—"A man's real life does not come out of his possessions."<sup>6</sup> Here is the parable as given by Luke: "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"<sup>7</sup> That is the way with the man who lays up money for himself and is not right with God.

The whole story is that of a man who thinks wealth is adequate to supply all life's needs. It falls naturally into two parts: First, the rich man as revealed by his own words. Second, the rich man in the eyes of God.

### I

"What am I going to do with my wealth?" It

<sup>7</sup> Luke 12: 16-20.

is the question that comes to every man as his wealth increases. It is a question worthy of much thought, for upon the answer hangs his fate. The question is equally insistent whether the wealth has been gained honestly or dishonestly. We have no reason to believe this rich farmer was dishonest. I believe he was scrupulously honest. His anxiety then is not that which comes from ill-gotten gain. It is that anxiety of great responsibility. After the law takes from a man all unjust and tainted portions of his fortune, conscience and necessity say to him, "What will you do with the rest?" It creates a perplexity that is natural, right, and insistent upon solution. If you believe with Jesus Christ that man is just a steward over his possessions, you realize how much depends upon the answer. In the parable of the talents, the pounds, and the unjust steward, Jesus argues on the assumption that all our resources are a trust, and not absolute property. We manage and control them, but always under responsibility. We hold them from God, and his will has eminent domain. But the Will of God is identical with the good of man. When we hold property in trust for God, we hold it for mankind. If the rich men had recognized this truth he would have been less perplexed. I imagine there were many empty barns and pantries where the rich



man could have put part of his crop. Perhaps Lazarus lived in the community. He could have used part of it. There were hundreds of half-starved lepers in the valley outside the city. They had no barns nor pantries, but their gnawing hunger suggests a place for part of this rich man's fruit and grain. What of the widows and orphans in the community? There was room, no doubt, in their larders for another sack of meal. If the rich man had had a little more of love, he would have had a great deal less of perplexity.

But the rich farmer's words reveal a man traveling along the road of selfishness. He saw no beggars by the wayside. He saw only himself. It is "my fruits," "my barns," "my corn," "my goods," and even "my soul." "'My' is the devil's pronoun," says Alexander Maclaren. It hardens a man's heart to the needs of others.

It is just one step from forgetting your fellow-men to forgetting God. And that is what the rich man did. He may have gone to the synagogue, but he never took God into his daily life. He lifted no prayers to the "Giver of all things," that he might be guided in the use of his fortune.

And what are men better than sheep or goats  
That nourish a blind life within the brain,

*Neil Crawford*

If knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer  
Both for themselves and those who call them friend.

This man did not have even as much religion as that Illinois farmer who prayed for "me and my wife, my son John and his wife, us four and no more." He never got any farther in grammar or religion than the first person, present tense.

He leaves out God, but keeps his Trinity. It is strange how the saints and sinners all cling to the Trinity. The saints have three great points in their confession of faith: "God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." The godless man's trinity is: "Eat, drink, and be merry." For these three he had planned, executed, and laid up his fruits and goods. It would seem that a spark of decency causes him to hesitate. He varnishes and white-washes the issue by talking to his soul. "Soul," said he, "soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry,"<sup>8</sup> as if his soul could eat the grain in his barns, and drink the wine in his cellar. Reuben Tinker makes a telling comment, "Sensual as he was, he was ashamed to think that he was making all this provision for his body, and placing the

<sup>8</sup> Luke 12: 19.



fountain of his happiness in his belly. But so it was, and so it is."

Here is the situation as described in 1856: "Sensuality is the pearl of great price, the one thing needful, the supreme good in the estimation of many. They may flatter themselves that they are not brutish by getting up an oration to their souls, and they may say, 'Soul, I have built thee a new house; soul, I have filled for thee the decanter; soul, I have procured for thee a mistress. Soul, thou hast much goods, eat, drink, and be merry.' " If that was true in the days of stagecoaches and ox-carts, how much more it is so today. We do not make so many orations to our souls, but we invent modern psychologies to do the same work. For what is much of this discussion of "self-expression" and "self-realization" but speeches made to quiet our conscience while we live like animals.

## II

But think of the result of these hypocritical orations while one travels the road of selfishness and sensuality. Think of the pathos of this rich man's life. He has more money than he knows what to do with. Yet he can find no higher enjoyment than eating and drinking. Poor indeed is the soul that is reduced to mere animal satisfaction for its

happiness. What a decline from the man God made in his own image. Yet history and our own experience show that such is the fate of men and women who do not cultivate their spiritual natures. The way of selfish enjoyment is a blind alley, a wide street indeed, but it is like the opening to a great cave. The entrance is the widest part. It gets narrower and darker as you travel along, until finally you come to a damp, black, lifeless hole, where no man can live. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."<sup>9</sup>

At the end of life he hears the voice of God which he had almost forgotten. How awfully God's voice breaks the tissues of his dreams! Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee, then whose shall these things be which thou hast provided.

"Thou fool!" It is God's estimate of this man. He is a fool because he thought he was traveling the way of real life. How many times had he said in the midst of his revelry—"This is what I call a real time, a real life."

But God doesn't wait till you are ready to die before he lets you know that you are traveling the wrong way. No, he warns you all along the jour-

<sup>9</sup> Ezekiel 18: 4.



## *Trails of Life*

ney. God gave this man a warning, but he did not heed. Why did he resolve to eat, drink, and be merry? It was because his life was hollow, meaningless, monotonous. Monotony is a red flag on the highway of life that tells you that you are on the wrong road. It is one of God's ways of speaking to you. A feeling of monotony is a sure sign of a run-down soul.

I met a young woman recently who is in poor health, one who has lost that spark of vitality that ought to mark every young person. What ought she to do about the matter? I had not been called as a physician; but from the standpoint of common sense, I would recommend sunshine, sleep, milk, and religion—she needs them all. But what does she take? Cigarettes, strong coffee and tea, wild parties, and unbelief in God. She would make a proper daughter for the foolish farmer. Both are fools. They say, "Eat, drink, and be merry, for thou hast goods laid up for many years." The ancient Epicureans of Greece lived that way, but they were not such fools. They said, "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you die." The farmer was a fool because he expected to spend many years in indulgent pleasure. But wise men know that the road of self-indulgence is a short trail. Liquor puts false vitality into a person, but it adds

nothing to his real strength; it simply draws on his capital. The prodigal son made a great splurge for a while, but he was living off his capital, and was soon eating with pigs. You not only live off your financial capital, you live off the capital of your soul, and soon find yourself spiritually bankrupt. The same is true of those who try to find happiness along the trail of sexual indulgence; in fact every way of life is a blind alley except that of self-giving love.

St. Augustine, as a young man, tried all the ways of selfish indulgence. He drank much liquor, was much given to banqueting, and kept a mistress; he sought happiness along all the trails of physical pleasure, but did not find it. He traveled a fast pace, and reached the end of his blind alley, while still a young man. Years later from out of his heart there came a revelation of divine truth: "O Lord, thou hast made us for thyself, and our souls are restless till they find their rest in thee."<sup>10</sup> Is your life monotonous? Are you one of those who say that you do not desire eternal life; it would be so boring? Then you are traveling up a blind alley. Walk for a while the way of unselfish love, and see how quickly life takes on real

<sup>10</sup> *Confessions*.



meaning. You will find that love is never monotonous. What proof do I offer you? I offer you no proof. I offer you simply a challenge and an invitation to try it. I invite you to think less about laying up money for yourself, and to think more of making the world a happier place for other men—for that is what Jesus means by being rich toward God.

“And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. For the life is more than the food, and the body than the raiment. Consider the ravens, that they sow not, neither reap; which have no store-chamber nor barn; and God feedeth them: of how much more value are ye than the birds! And which of you by being anxious can add a cubit unto his stature? If then ye are not able to do even that which is least, why are ye anxious concerning the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; yet I say unto you, Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass in the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more shall he clothe you, O ye of little faith? And seek not ye what ye shall eat, and what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubt-

ful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: but your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. Howbeit seek ye his kingdom, and these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell that ye have, and give alms; make for yourselves purses which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief draweth near, neither moth destroyeth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." <sup>11</sup>

### III

What connection has this command with the parable of the rich farmer? Simply this, the rich farmer, and the poor disciple, who worries about earthly things, are the same man in different clothes. They are both suffering from the belief that wealth can satisfy all a man's needs. One has money and worships it, the other has no money, but is equally guilty of the sin of worshiping earthly possessions. They are both traveling the wrong road of life. The rich farmer is at the end of the trail. The poor man is at the beginning.

In this immortal discourse Jesus says three things

<sup>11</sup> Luke 12: 22-34.



regarding anxiety about worldly matters. First, it is unreasonable. "Look at the fowls of the heaven: they do not sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye more then they? . . . . Mark the lilies of the field how they grow: they labor not nor spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. And if the grass of the field, which today is and tomorrow is flung into an oven, God doth so clothe, how much more you, oh ye of little faith?"<sup>12</sup> Jesus here throws his disciples back on the providence of God, his wise and almighty government of the world. He made everything and he cares for everything. Everything, great or small, has a place and portion in the Creator's beneficent care. David Smith says, "It is an argument from fact such as Jesus loved." If God cares for lesser things, the birds, the flowers, nay, the very grass, will he not much more care for you, his children! This was a mighty argument when Jesus spoke it, but is far more powerful now in the light of the Cross. It is stated in triumphant fulness by Paul. "He that spared not his own Son, but for us all delivered him up, how shall he not also with him freely give us all

<sup>12</sup> Matthew 6: 26-30.

things?"<sup>13</sup> It is unreasonable for a Christian not to trust a God who "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have life eternal."<sup>14</sup>

Again, anxiety about worldly matters is useless. "Which of you with all his worry can add a single hour to his life?"<sup>15</sup> Half the troubles you anticipate never arrive. And to worry about the future only embitters the present, and does not avert any disasters. Yet there are some parents who think worry is a measure of the love they have for their children. If you worry more than your neighbor it does not necessarily indicate that you love your children more; it may indicate that you trust God less. There are two kinds of things a person ought not to worry about. First, those that you can help. For if you can help them, you ought to do it. Second, one ought not to worry about the things he cannot prevent, for all the worry in the world will not help any.

Finally, Jesus says anxiety about world matters is irreligious. "After all these things the heathen seek."<sup>16</sup> And it is nothing strange that those not

<sup>13</sup> Romans 8: 32.

<sup>14</sup> John 3: 16.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Matthew 6: 27.

<sup>16</sup> Matthew 6: 32.



knowing about the heavenly Father should be anxious about food and raiment. But his children should trust him more. "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things."<sup>17</sup> Anxiety about worldly matters is in truth practical heathenism, and Jesus bids his disciples decide which they will worship. "No man can serve two lords; for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."<sup>18</sup> "This is God's remedy: to believe utterly in the heavenly Father's love and wisdom and make his Kingdom and his righteousness the supreme concerns, leaving all lesser interests in his hands." "Seek ye first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."<sup>19</sup> As you walk along life's highway you can say with the confidence of the psalmist, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. . . . Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me."<sup>20</sup> And at the end you will look back and Paul's words will be yours, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to

<sup>17</sup> Romans 8: 32.

<sup>19</sup> Matthew 6: 33.

<sup>18</sup> Matthew 6: 24.

<sup>20</sup> Psalm 23: 1, 4.

keep that which I have entrusted unto him," <sup>21</sup> even throughout eternity.

Jesus offers that trust as a cure for anxiety. And for the earthly treasure you cease to covet, he offers you a heavenly treasure. "Make for yourselves purses which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief draweth near, neither moth destroyeth." <sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> I Timothy 1: 12.

<sup>22</sup> Luke 12: 33.



## CHAPTER TEN

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### *A Declaration of Independence*

BY ARTHUR E. COWLEY <sup>1</sup>

Make me as one of thy hired servants.

Luke 15: 19.

A MOTHER who had lost her son in the World War was asked a strange question by a friend, "If you could have your boy back for just a few minutes, at what age or in what experience would you like to have him?" Her answer, at first, seems almost as strange as the request. She related a boyhood experience in which he had been reprimanded for some act of disobedience. At first he was quite rebellious, but after a while all this disappeared and he was at her side seeking forgiveness and promising that he would try to do better in the future. "If I might have him back for just a few moments," she said, "I think that I would like to have him as he was then, for that picture has been one of the treasures on memory's wall." Just a little thought helps us to appreciate this mother's feeling. Certainly in this the greatest of

<sup>1</sup> For a biographical sketch of Arthur E. Cowley, see p. 215.

the Master's parables, the words of the text present the prodigal in one of his most attractive moods.

To be sure, one may debate the motive behind these words. Was it a sense of shame that he had failed so miserably and so was no longer worthy to be called a son? Was it the deep consciousness of his own inability to handle his own life? Or was it because he was tired and weary of responsibility? Who can say? Probably all of these played a part even as our own actions are prompted by mixed motives. But no matter what the primary impulse was, the words surely come from a soul thoroughly chastened and subdued by life. How glaring is the contrast between this declaration of dependence and the statement of independence with which he started out his experiment to live his own life. What a long distance there is between these two attitudes! And surely our prodigal generation can readily understand the mood of this young man. In our love of liberty many have been engulfed by the tide of self-expression. Others did not stop there, but went on to self-explosion, not merely living their own lives but wrecking them. Gradually we see and hear the signs of a reaction. The disillusionment and disappointment of many who have found so little in "the new freedom" are becoming very evident.



### *A Declaration of Independence*

So much was promised as they smiled at the old loyalties but so little has been realized!

When something like this happens to the human heart there are but two courses left. One may return to the forgotten and despised loyalties to find life reaching its highest satisfaction not in self-expression but in self-realization. Such was the prodigal's way. Or, failing to follow this road, we may become cynical about life's purpose and meaning. Listen to one who illustrates this. He was a young man of brilliant promise, but after dying by his own hand left this farewell note, "I have run from house to house, and from country to country in a ridiculous effort to escape myself. . . . No one thing is responsible for this and no one purpose—except myself. I did it because I am fed up with inventing devices for getting through twenty-four hours a day." This is an extreme illustration of what many have found in a lesser way, for the far country as Winston Churchill showed does not always mean sensual indulgence but also the betrayal of inherited moral and spiritual standards of life. Such experiences as these make our subject timely.

Let us first then consider the fact that *freedom is not enough*. In this way we may paraphrase the

words of Edith Cavell that "Patriotism is not enough." The man who spoke the words of the text found this out through bitter, personal experience. There was a time in his life when he thought that it was, when he dreamed of freedom as the greatest thing in all the world. It was the thing without which life seemed unbearable. But why is it that ultimately all men must come to the same conclusion as regards freedom? To begin with, we ought to remember that freedom is not an end in itself but only a means, and that disaster always comes when we mistake any means for an end. This does not mean that we do not appreciate man's heroic struggle through the ages for various kinds of freedom but only that we must recognize its proper place. When we have freedom what shall we do with it? Shall we pitch our lives high or low, do as we like or as we ought? Our answer to this determines whether freedom shall be a curse or a blessing. Take the leisure-time problem about which we hear so much. Leisure-time with "nothing to do" or to do the wrong thing as every parent knows spells trouble for all. With freedom alone one may become a tramp gaining freedom but losing direction. Think of our new freedom in the realm of scientific achievement. Man has now the freedom of the universe in his



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ability to almost annihilate space. But Professor MacDougall reminds us that with such instruments civilization must guard itself against destruction. Time alone, he reminds us, can tell whether the conquest of the air was a great victory or a fatal mistake. Surely in the light of such facts freedom needs other reinforcements.

A second thing that we must consider is the fact that freedom may easily be abused and so degenerate into lawlessness, a state in which an attempt is made to overthrow all discipline, restraint, and authority. The tragedy with many who make this mistake is not merely that they have thrown away old standards but that they have no new ones at all. Such liberty, however, is best described as license and leads all its followers to their own undoing. We are born, we live, and die in a law-abiding world. By the very nature of this world and the kind of individuals we are, freedom is limited. Achievements in all fields of human endeavor—art, science, or sport—come through obedience to the laws of the thing in which we are interested. They are the rules of the game and without them there would be no game. After the temporary restraint we enjoy the larger liberty of enjoying and creating. On the other hand, the man who exercises his freedom to drink or indulge

in drugs soon finds his temporary freedom supplanted by a terrible bondage. Liberty by way of license always defeats itself, for if we use the world for our pleasure, it will ultimately make us its slave. To ignore the laws which are but as white poles on the highway of life to guide and warn, is but to encourage a crash that will leave nothing behind but a pile of wreckage. The man who jumps out of a window in defiance of the law of gravitation soon finds this out.

The third thing that suggests itself to us as an indication of the insufficiency of freedom is the fact that freedom itself presumes and requires other qualities. Why do we say that young people should have only as much freedom as they can wisely handle? Is it not because we realize that liberty in the hands of the immature is a perilous thing for all concerned? It demands evaluation and decision and so becomes one of the greatest tests of character. One of our adolescent problems is the development from childish dependence to adult independence, and it is particularly important in this generation when youth has more freedom than it ever had. As this process goes on we must be continually on guard lest we think that freedom means the casting off of responsibility. Henry Drummond showed us how roses when left to grow wild



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often slip back and lose their sweetness and beauty. All of which means that in the highest sense of the word freedom is not a gift but an achievement and the fruit of effort.

And since we have seen the inadequacy of freedom alone let us now turn to that which must be joined with it to make it sufficient. *Loyalty and freedom must go together.* How evident this is in the experience of the prodigal! After pursuing the lesser freedom he returns to find the greater freedom in the loyalties of the filial relationship. Somehow he found it impossible to realize his best self apart from right relations to his father. And this becomes increasingly true of mankind, for we are to be judged not so much by our achievements as by our relations. The young man took the right course as experience demonstrates by a number of reasons. First, man is bound to have some master. He is made by nature to serve. His only freedom is to choose whom he will serve. All of us are mastered by some passion. It may be lust, money, fame, pleasure, or service. Man's quest has been that he might choose which of these he would serve. How well Jesus knew this. The Pilgrims came to America not to throw away all authority but to choose whom they would obey. The prodigal when

he left turned aside from the authority of father to the mastery of indulgence. Without some great loyalty to unite and harmonize our conflicting desires we are but as driftwood swept by every passing impulse. To be masters of our fate we must be mastered by something and someone greater than ourselves, that lifts us up and fuses all our personality into some great passionate endeavor. We are not free to go anywhere unless we are going somewhere. Without the grip of some purpose we are as a man without a country. That inner freedom for which we hunger waits for he who can set us free.

And the second great fact which forces itself upon us is that God alone can call forth that loyalty that completes and glorifies freedom. In his will is not only our peace but our freedom. Loyalty to him is the soil in which the other great loyalties of life grow and flourish. It is this fact that shows us the danger of a godless view of life. And all the great spiritual seers of the race have found it so. The Master himself voluntarily put the Father's will supreme and called upon all men to do the same. Was he not the freest man that ever lived? Consider his great apostle, Paul. What happened on the way to Damascus? He simply changed masters. How he loved to describe himself as "the



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bond-servant of Jesus." And what freedom he too found! And the hymn writer breathes out this same experience when he prays,

Make me a captive, Lord,  
And then I shall be free;  
Force me to render up my sword,  
And I shall conquerer be.

As one looks at the modern world today with its bewilderment how evident is its hunger for authority and security. Democracies have fallen, dictatorships have arisen, and nations and men scan the horizon for a leader. Was not the Church born for such a time as this? Does she not alone have that leader who in himself unites freedom and loyalty? He has not lost faith in people, and he can lead us in our struggle to achieve the ideals for which men have toiled and which now seem in danger. In surrender to him man reaches his highest freedom. And when we come to serve him we hear him say, "I call you not servants but friends."<sup>2</sup> Hear him again: "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed."<sup>3</sup> His cross on Calvary was but the Father's way of trying to win us back

<sup>2</sup> John 15: 15.

<sup>3</sup> John 8: 36.

*Arthur E. Cowley*

from the slavery of sin to the freedom of the sons of God. With rare insight and beauty Studdert Kennedy tells the story:

And yet, I remember, a lad o' mine,  
    'E's fightin' now on the sea,  
And 'e were a thorn in 'is mother's side  
    And the plague o' my life to me.

Lord, 'ow I used to swish that lad  
    Till 'e fairly yelped wi' pain,  
But fast as I thrashed one devil out  
    Another popped in again.

And at last, when 'e grew up a strapping lad,  
    'E ups and 'e says to me,  
"My will's my own and my life's my own,  
    And I'm goin', Dad, to sea!"

Well, maybe, that's 'ow it is wi' God—  
    'Is sons 'av' got to be free;  
So the Father God goes sorrowing still  
    For 'Is world what 'as gone to sea,  
But 'E runs up a light on Calvary's 'ight  
    That beacons to you and me.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Copyright. Used by permission.



## CHAPTER ELEVEN

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### *Opening Blind Eyes*

BY EDWARD O. CLARK <sup>1</sup>

One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind,  
now I see. John 9: 25.

LET us think of this narrative of Jesus restoring sight to the blind man after the fashion of a spiritual parable. Our justification for this approach is in the fact that the gospel writer himself interprets the miracle in a spiritual manner. For the Pharisees with all of their seeing are represented as being blind, whereas this blind man at the last gained spiritual sight. When he saw Jesus as the Messiah, after his sight had been restored, he exulted fervently saying, "Lord, I believe." Hence it is clear that John is recording a double miracle: that of giving sight to the eyes and of light to the soul.

#### SIGHT AND INSIGHT

Jesus has been doing this latter thing all along, and of the two accomplishments the giving of spiritual insight is in many ways more important than

<sup>1</sup> For a biographical sketch of Edward O. Clark, see p. 215.

restoring physical sight. Aunt Hope, a character in Dorothy Clarke Wilson's play, "The Light in the Window," speaking to Jeremy who has been blinded by an accident says: "I can't help being sorry for anybody that doesn't believe in God's love, when every flower that blooms is just breathing out the mystery and joy of a new life. It seems so much worse than being blind, somehow. I'd so much rather have unseeing eyes than an unseeing heart."<sup>2</sup> That's it! Better to have unseeing eyes than an unseeing heart; better far to see the true meaning and the solemn glory of life than to see only the external husks of things. Insight is not less important than sight.

And similar instances where both sight and insight have been the hoped-for result are not lacking in modern times. Recently the newspapers recorded the story of Earl Musselman, a man born blind who had his sight restored by the technical skill of a famous surgeon. It is only one of the many miracles of modern medical science. Here was a man to whom the world about him was a blur of voices, sounds, and scents in a confused, inky blackness; and with the restoration of physical sight he, too, gained a spiritual discernment. "The

<sup>2</sup> Copyright, by Walter H. Baker Company. Used by permission.



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most outstanding thing," he says, according to the account, "is the fact that so many of you are oblivious to all the beauty around you—colors, flowers, trees, fields, rivers, mountains, skies, sunsets, moonlight, and the sea and all the glories of nature that makes the world seem like a Garden of Eden to me. I cannot help thinking that there is another kind of blindness almost as bad as that of the eyes—a blindness of the soul that keeps sighted people from really seeing and enjoying the beauties of nature." With his sight came insight.

#### THE TESTIMONY OF THE CHRISTIAN

There is no disputing the reality of the experiences of these men, whether having reference to sight or to insight; it is simply this: "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind now I see." And the testimony of the Christian today while varying in form is constant in content and is to be stated somewhat as follows, Formerly I looked out upon life, but I was blind to the real meaning hidden everywhere. I saw life centered only in self and everything was vain, futile, lustful. As an unknown author has written,

I lived for self, I thought for self,  
For self and none beside;

Edward O. Clark

Just as if Jesus had never lived,  
And as if He had never died.<sup>3</sup>

But now all that is changed: Jesus has opened my eyes. I see life marvelous in beauty and freighted with a divine significance that makes my heart thrill perpetually. I see my life now as an indispensable part of the divine creation. My supreme joy is to do God's will and to accomplish the work he has for me. My life, instead of being inane and purposeless, now is one "with the process of the suns."<sup>4</sup> With Browning, I see

. . . . the world,  
The beauty and the wonder and the power,  
The shapes of things, their colors, lights and shades,  
Changes, surprises, and—  
God made it all!

#### CHRISTIANS OR PAGANS

It is just here that we find a clue to an essential grouping of people today; namely, in the distinction between those who have spiritual insight and those who, in the presence of life's deeper mysteries, manifest little other than physical sight. A con-

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Bertha Conde in *The Human Element in Making a Christian*.

<sup>4</sup> Tennyson in *Locksley Hall*.



trary philosophy of life differentiates them. The first group is spiritually minded; the latter group is materialistic. The former is committed to a purposeful, hopeful interpretation of life and the universe; the latter sees the universe in rigid mechanistic terms and views life's goal solely as hedonistic. The eyes of one group have been opened by Jesus: they are Christians. The eyes of the other group have never been opened by anyone: they are pagans.

These two groups, Christians and pagans, abound side by side in our modern life and are perpetually in conflict. The pagans, or those whom Matthew Arnold characterizes from a cultural viewpoint as Philistines, are grossly materialistic and sensual. Life to them is meaningless, a hopeless enigma save as they can seize a sensual thrill or two before they come upon the extinction of death. They look upon the Christian Church as an antiquated institution. They have only patronizing pity to bestow upon any who cherish ideals of honor, faith, and love. They speak of fidelity in marriage as foolishly puritanical. In business as in other realms, jungle ethics is considered more efficient than soft-hearted love.

That such a blase outlook upon life is prevalent today is clearly evidenced by our corrupt motion picture and theater offerings, by the immoral filth

of many novels, and by the baby-like cry for intoxicants which has raised such a din in our ears of late. This is the new paganism and not a few of those who in earlier years glimpsed the light in Christ have been caught in the grip of its enervating darkness.

### THE BLIND ONES

As an example of this pagan spirit there is the tragic life-story of the young woman known as Starr Faithful, who gained much notoriety a few years ago. What a name to have lived up to! But in the futile, wanton wasting of her life and in her final disillusionment in a suicidal death, how pitiful she was! Her confession written shortly before her death contained, according to the newspapers, the following lines which evidenced her great despair: "I certainly have made a sordid, futureless mess of it all. I am dead sick of it. It is no one's fault but my own. I hate everything so. Life is so horrible!" The last four lines were underscored three times.

What was the matter with Starr Faithful? She was blind. Blind! Thrice blind she was to the finer and nobler purposes in life. Certainly we ought not harshly to condemn such ones, to say that they are terrible, to hold up our hands in horror. Let us be charitable. Let us take the atti-



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tude of Jesus and look upon their evident sinfulness as a sordid darkness of soul.

In fact the Starr Faithfuls may well be likened to black sheep. Out in the Colorado Rockies a Mexican shepherd was tending a great flock of some two thousand sheep. One day a visitor happened along and fell into conversation with the shepherd. As they conversed together a black sheep began to stray across a ravine to graze in tall grass on the other side. Soon the other sheep were following until the shepherd was compelled to call them back. One by one they responded to his call, but the black sheep was the last of all to heed. Then the visitor said something about the proverbial "black sheep." "You think the black sheep bad?" queried the shepherd. "No," he continued answering his own question, "not bad, only foolish." So it is, I think, with many of our modern pagans: they are not really bad, only foolish and blind.

#### THOSE WITH SEEING HEARTS

Christians, however, by their discernment of the spiritual meaning of life are to be differentiated from such pagans as these. Jesus has opened their eyes first of all to the great thrilling Reality, God, in whom their own little lives find a larger and an eternal destiny. Thence comes the noble vision,

the purposeful life of worthy service, and that intuition which pierces the perplexing mysteries of heartaches and sorrows to their ultimate solution in the good that can be wrought out of them by a buoyant faith. This conviction concerning life's spiritual verities has come to them not by reason, nor by logic, but by a deep insight quickened into consciousness by the radiant personality of Jesus. He has given them the seeing heart.

It is essentially a quality of life, and it was this element which was lacking in the formal religion of the Pharisees. Jesus made it a fundamental prerequisite for his followers when he said to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again." <sup>5</sup>

This insight of the soul is illumined for us in the story of the love of Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning. The beautiful and ennobling quality of their love is well known, and it is true, as someone has said, that one does not fall into such love, one rises to it. In a couplet from her *Sonnets to the Portuguese* Elizabeth Barrett Browning has recorded the transformation which came to her thereby. Wrought by that high and holy love she says,

The face of all the world is changed, I think,  
Since first I heard the footsteps of thy soul.

<sup>5</sup> John 3: 7.



### *Opening Blind Eyes*

In like manner one in whom Jesus of Nazareth has wrought the spiritual miracle can say,

The face of all the world, of life, even of death is changed,  
O Christ!

Since first I heard the footsteps of Thy Soul.

It is the blind heart saying, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."

### THE CHRISTIAN IRRATIONAL

Now it is important that we should frankly admit that the Christian outlook upon life is not based upon rigid logic nor upon ascertainable facts, but upon this spiritual intuition. That is to say, the Christian life is an adventure and calls for daring; it cannot be proven in advance. True, Christian apologetics may call logic and reason to its aid, but such assistance is essentially in support of a position first of all attained by insight.

Actually at the heart of the Christian outlook upon life there is an irrational. In the Corinthian letter the Apostle Paul stated it bluntly when he called himself a "fool for Christ's sake."<sup>6</sup> He recounts his life, filled, as it has been, with suffering and hardship and yet he says, "being reviled, we

<sup>6</sup> I Corinthians 4: 10-13.

bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat.”<sup>6</sup> One cannot justify such a life by Epicurean ethics, nor can he endure it by Stoic stolidness, nor integrate it successfully into the framework of our modern materialism. Such a “foolish” kind of life is born solely of faith.

In fact the most zealous of Jesus’ followers have always been considered a little daft. Beginning with Paul there came later Savonarola, Saint Francis of Assisi, John Huss, George Fox, John Bunyan, Father Damien, Robert Morrison, Adoniram Judson, Toyohiko Kagawa, and so on—the list could be extended almost indefinitely—all of them “fools for Christ’s sake.”

Is it not the height of absurdity for a brilliant young man, having secured the best education an enlightened country can give, with bright promise of success, comfort, and fame, suddenly to turn his back upon it all and to bury himself in a foreign land amid a backward, uncouth people there to live out his life in unselfish service? Yet just that is the magnificent irrational of a Livingstone in Africa, of a Grenfell in bleak Labrador, of a Schweitzer in the Lamberene forest of Africa.

These men, it is true, are outstanding examples of the vicarious spirit, but every understanding follower of Jesus is committed to the same essential



### *Opening Blind Eyes*

quality of life. All are splendidly illogical, and yet Time has greatly confirmed the truth of the spiritual insight on which their lives have been based. Their eyes were opened by One who said, "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."<sup>7</sup>

#### THE HIGHER VISION

It is impossible to portray here all the qualitative aspects of life which faith in the illuminating personality of Jesus brings. There is the ability to see life in terms of high moral values; the good that abides in relationships between men, nations, and races when those relationships are motivated by love rather than by selfish interest. There is the meaning which colors the most insignificant event when viewed from the poetic heights of the hymn, "This Is My Father's World." There is the daring to relieve that one's life is clothed with a significance that is not exhausted by time, but which extends on into the eternal world because it partakes of the ultimate Reality, God. In every instance, to see life aright is less a matter of logic than it is an up-leaping of the soul in an act of spiritual discernment. With the reality comes the certainty: "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."

Sometimes, faced as we are with the necessity of

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 10: 39.

continually resisting the tides of paganism about us, we tend to grow discouraged, the vision dims. What we need then is for Jesus to touch the soul again and restore spiritual sight. Sometimes we become disillusioned, finding it no longer possible to resolve the stern, harsh realities of suffering in terms of an understanding Heart at the center of things. Again, let it be said that Jesus can open blind hearts to the majesty of that divine goal to which the whole creation travaileth in pain, so that at last it can be said, "All things work together for good to them that love God."<sup>8</sup> Sometimes we find ourselves pulled by the crowd into a cynical interpretation of life. It is then that we must company anew with Christ and catch again the vision of a Divine love ceaselessly at work for our redemption.

Not by forceful effort, nor by vain wishing can we gain the boon of the seeing heart. It is not by the bootstraps that one lifts his soul into the Kingdom of Heaven. Rather is it to be gained by the contagion of Christ which comes as one lives over again in imagination the life-events of this transcendent figure as recorded in the gospel narratives; and the blessed vision comes also by a simple sincerity in following him day by day.

<sup>8</sup> Romans 8: 28.



## CHAPTER TWELVE

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### *A Christian Strategy for a Pagan World*

BY FREDERICK W. SCHROEDER <sup>1</sup>

I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth. As thou didst send me into the world, even so sent I them into the world. John 17: 15-18.

OUT of the ruins and ashes of our economic catastrophe several facts have emerged that should prove to be helpful to the moral life of the individual as well as the race. For one thing we know that we are neither as intelligent nor as virtuous as we thought ourselves to be. Adversity has shattered our complacency and chastened our spirit. We have also discovered that our civilization is not as Christian as we thought it to be. The years of prosperity had momentarily obscured the wide disparity between our Christian idealism and the world's realism. Now our commercial and indus-

<sup>1</sup> For a biographical sketch of Frederick W. Schroeder, see p. 220.

trial life stands revealed in all its pagan stupidity, ruthlessness, selfishness, and greed. Another truth that we see more clearly today than ever before is the difficulty of squaring our conduct with our ideals. Even though man's behavior as an individual may be quite above reproach, his behavior as a member of society is not nearly as commendable. For as Dr. Niebuhr has pointed out, moral man finds himself in an immoral society. The environment in which we live tends to make us worse than we would be if left to our own devices. The predatory habits of society corrupt the conduct of the individual.

Trying to live a Christian life in a pagan world has never been simple. It certainly is not easy today when life has become so very complex and we find ourselves unknowingly involved in any number of un-Christian situations. Jesus wrestled with that problem on the night of his betrayal. The very fact that he made it the subject of prayer indicates how very near this was to his heart. In the words of our text he defined what might be called "A Christian Strategy for a Pagan World."

## I

It is significant that Jesus did not ask for a sheltered or secluded life for his followers. "I



pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world,"<sup>2</sup> he petitioned the Father. A man of less insight and less courage might have sought special privileges and favors for his friends. Not so Jesus. He acknowledged the fact that his followers would have to live their life in the world; and he had discovered it to be a very cruel world. He cherished no illusions about the difficulties before them. It had not been easy for him; it would not be easy for them. The temptation to compromise had dogged him all the way. The cross had cast its shadow across his path since the beginning of his ministry. The same temptations and difficulties would be their lot. In fact, on another occasion he had made bold to say, "Behold, I send you forth as a lamb among wolves."<sup>3</sup> And what chance has a lamb among wolves save that of being devoured! No, in the strategy of Jesus there is no place for an easy escape from the heavy responsibilities, the luring temptations, and the fierce conflicts of life.

Perhaps Jesus was content to have his disciples remain in the world because he saw that their spirit was not of the world. And he prayed that it might ever be thus. He asked the Father that they might be kept "from the evil one."<sup>4</sup> Even more signifi-

<sup>2</sup> John 17: 15.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 10: 16.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 6: 13.

cant is the petition, "Sanctify them in the truth." <sup>5</sup> He would have them so confirmed in the truth of his kingdom that the world would not be able to shake their convictions or contaminate their morals. He had not accommodated himself to the standards of the world; neither had he compromised his ideals to gain his ends. When his friends had counseled him to do the expedient thing of avoiding danger his face was steadfastly set to go to Jerusalem. That same steadfastness of purpose he desired for his disciples. He would have them be in the world, dangerous as it might be; but he would not have them be of the world.

In the strategy of Jesus there is something akin to the strategy of the undercover man who disguises himself and lives for a while among the beggarly elements of the underworld in order that he might discover all their haunts and hang-outs. He moves among them but he is not really one of them. Christian missionaries in pagan lands frequently live in the center of heathen degradation and vice, and yet in that environment of superstition, ignorance, and immorality you will find the highest type of Christian manhood to be found anywhere in the world. Though identifying themselves with the

<sup>5</sup> John 17: 17.



### *A Christian Strategy for a Pagan World*

communities in which they live, they are not a party to the life of sin and shame which is all around them. As the snow-white lily with its heart of gold and a fragrance seemingly coming from an upper world is sometimes seen to grow in a death and disease infected marsh, so Christians may live in a world dominated by materialism, secularism, and sensualism without ever letting such worldliness sear God's image in the soul.

The early Christians seem to have succeeded fairly well in their understanding and application of this strategy. They were in the world without being of the world. The early Church was a kind of autonomous society that was not involved in any of the organized movements of that day. It had no stake in the civilization of Rome. It was free to command and equally free to condemn. Would that Protestantism occupied such a strategic position today! The aloofness of the Christian Church in the first centuries gave it a place of singular prestige and power. Perhaps not the kind of power that many of us crave—the power to control government and business; but they spoke without fear or favor. And as a result they really touched life in a redemptive way. No doubt it was this staunch refusal to compromise, more than anything else, that precipitated the bloody persecutions; for the

world of that day no more than the world of today was willing to countenance a minority movement challenging a majority morality. But it was that very refusal which turned the world upside down.

## II

However, there came a time when the Church found it easier to make its peace with the world than to hold to this lofty position. It all came about quite naturally in A.D. 325. Just before a momentous battle Constantine made a vow that if his forces were victorious he would put an end to the persecution of the Christians. Whether he made the vow to win the support of the Christians or to get the blessing of the Christians' God is hard to determine. The fact is that Constantine won the victory, which was at the same time a victory for the Christian cause. For the Christians it was a day of great rejoicing, and who would not rejoice under similar circumstances! But in the light of subsequent events one wonders whether tears would not have been more appropriate. For while it was true that Christianity had conquered the world, the world had also conquered Christianity; and apparently the world had won the greater victory. From that day on it became increasingly evident that Christianity was not merely in the world, but



it was also of the world. The strategy bequeathed by Jesus to his followers and which had won such memorable victories was vitiated more and more by accommodations to the standards of the world.

As we look out upon the scene today we must confess to our shame that the Christian movement is of the world as well as in the world. We who bear the name of Christ must admit that "the world is too much with us," though in a somewhat different sense than Wordsworth meant to suggest. And not only does this world "lay waste our powers," it also corrupts our morals. Christianity is so much involved in western civilization that it lacks both the insight and the courage to expose its iniquities. That is true of Roman Catholicism even though its insistence upon a temporal sovereignty has been a kind of claim that it is not of the world. But Catholicism has undermined the strength of its position and denied the strategy of its ideal by resorting to the methods of the world to achieve its ends. Protestantism is perhaps even more involved in the affairs of the world. All too often it has entered into an alliance with the secular powers, mistaking compromise for victory. Incriminating as the confession may be, the fact remains that Christianity is so much a part of the world that the State has almost always been able to count on the

Church to bless whatever policy it has pursued, whether its policy be a bit of imperialism abroad or capitalism at home. And when the Church has dared to lift its voice in protest it has discovered, much to its dismay, that its members were more interested in preserving the *status quo* than in sponsoring some fundamental change. It is a rather sad commentary that the ideal of social justice strikes a more responsive chord in atheistic Russia than in so-called Christian America. Frequently some good Christian business man is heard to demand that the Church stick to its task of preaching the gospel and to let business alone.

Little wonder that voices are heard counseling the Christian Church to become once more an ascetic movement. For although asceticism, like apocalypticism, is a kind of escape mechanism leaving the world to its fate, it is also a very vigorous protest against the fact that the church has sold its soul to the world. Those who in Middle Ages took up with asceticism and withdrew into the monastery, there to be the better able to live the Christian life without compromise, literally ran away from the world. They met the requirement of Jesus in so far as they were not of the world, but they defeated his purpose by running out of the world. And the tragedy of the Middle Ages was



just this, that its saintless souls who might have been a saving power if they had become fearless preachers of righteousness permitted the world to sink deeper and deeper into the mire of disintegration and decay.

### III

In order that we might not be of the world the prayer of Jesus—"sanctify them in the truth"—comes to our day with a singular fitness and piognancy. We need to be sanctified in the truth of the Kingdom of God rather than to subscribe to the truths and half-truths of western civilization which have made life comfortable and pleasant for the few rather than righteous and just for the many. Being sanctified in the truth means more than rendering lip service to the ideals of Jesus on Sunday while we follow our selfish impulses on week days. A newspaper man recently stated, "Officially, we admire and profess the principles of Christianity. Actually, we don't believe in them at all, and devise all sorts of legal machinery that will enable us to live approximately civilized lives without making the sacrifices required by the sort of living Jesus suggested." And then he goes on to say, "We shall probably continue in turmoil until we make up our minds which way we really

want to go. We shall have to scrap democracy and the rules of Christ, or try practicing them. As long as we keep on compromising there will be no health in us.”<sup>6</sup>

Neither will there be any real moral vigor in us. The usefulness of Christianity to the world depends upon the measure of its detachment from the world. Jesus had a very lofty conception of what his followers might do for the world. He declared them to be “the salt of the earth”; they would purify the moral tone of life and prevent the disintegration of civilization. He declared them to be “the light of the world”;<sup>7</sup> they would dispel the darkness of ignorance and error and teach mankind to walk in the ways of God. He compared Christianity with the leaven that is put into dough; its ideals would pervade all of life so that the world would be cleansed and regenerated from within. But how can a Christianity that is of the world act as a salt, a light, or a leaven to redeem the world? Only a religion that has kept itself pure and unspotted from the sins of the world can discharge the Master’s commission and meet his requirements. First he would have his followers

<sup>6</sup> Howard Vincent O’Brien, in the *Chicago Daily News*.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 5: 13.



sanctified in the truth, and then he would send them into the world. "As thou didst send me, even so sent I them into the world"; <sup>8</sup> not to be conquered by the world but to conquer the world.

Here is our task. Fortified by profound religious convictions and high Christian ideals, we are to go out into the world where the forces of good and evil are wrestling for supremacy and where the destiny of mankind is being wrought. No cloistered life for the followers of Jesus! Cutting ourselves loose from the halfway measures of the world and marching whole-heartedly under the banner of the cross, we shall yet win a great victory for the Lord our God.

<sup>8</sup> John 17: 18.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

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### *Gathered Grapes*

BY SAMUEL C. CARSON <sup>1</sup>

Make no mistake—God is not to be mocked  
—a man will reap just what he sows.

Galatians 6: 7 (Moffatt).

**I**N the blue haze of an October day in thousands of vineyards all over the great San Joaquin Valley a traveler may see one of the great sights of California connected with an industry that brings millions of dollars into the pockets of the thrifty ranchers. It is the time of the grape harvest. The picking of luscious grapes of every tint and flavor engages a great army of busy workers, whose deft fingers cut off bunches of translucent grapes that rival in size and beauty the long-famed "grapes of Eschol." The large clusters are placed on trays and left to dry in the sunshine. One may see rows upon rows of these gathered bunches that fill the space between the vines reaching the entire length of the vineyard.

Over 100,000 tons of raisins are made each year.

<sup>1</sup> For a biographical sketch of Samuel C. Carson, see p. 214.



### *Gathered Grapes*

The total tonnage of grapes for the entire State in a recent big year came to the huge sum of 1,967,000 tons.

This miracle of gathered grapes had been made possible by the courage, perseverance, and untiring efforts of a great company of workers, for much work must be done before astonishing results could be achieved. It was a daily battle against time, a struggle for the survival of the fittest. Indolence, carelessness, and incompetence on the part of the rancher spelled defeat and ruin. The battle was waged against adverse elements and insidious foes. The rancher had to be alert against thrips, monothodes, and mildew. Water pumped from the earth or brought from the snow-capped peaks of the Sierras was conveyed to the thirsty roots, and the ground was carefully mulched, and every up-to-date method was employed to bring to maturity the coveted harvest of gathered grapes.

And this is true in every department of life, whether it be in the commercial, educational, scientific, moral, or spiritual realms, gathered grapes are the result of deliberate action and oft-times the results are appalling and tragic as well as supremely blessed. Beautiful grapes that satisfy the highest aspirations of the soul, sublime conceptions, great ideals, and noble living may enrich character

and bless and glorify the lives of humanity; and the converse is also true, that grapes that set the teeth on edge and burn and blister and sear the hearts of men may be the harvest.

The Apostle Paul in his letter to the Galatians teaches this great truth, and warns the believers against the reactionaries in the Church who sought to bring the Christians back to the bondage of Judaical ceremonialism, and sternly censures those who sought to undermine their faith in Christ as the means of their salvation. "O senseless Galatians, who has bewitched you—you who had Jesus Christ the crucified placarded before your very eyes? . . . . You observe days and months and festal seasons and years! Why, you make me afraid I may have to spend my labour on you for nothing! . . . . O my dear children, you with whom I am in travail over again till Christ be formed within you. . . . Here, listen to Paul! I tell you, if you get circumcised, Christ will be no use to you. . . . In Christ Jesus circumcision is not valid, neither is uncircumcision but only faith active in love."<sup>2</sup>

Paul strove with passionate eagerness and love to stem the tide of reaction, and with keen logic he overthrew the falseness of the Judaizing teachers

<sup>2</sup> Galatians 3: 1; 4: 10, 11, 19; 5: 1-6 (Moffatt).



and lovingly admonished the brethren to "walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh";<sup>3</sup> but if they determined to "walk after the flesh," they must expect to reap the harvest of ceremonial bondage which would lead to spiritual decay and death.

The faith of the Galatians in Jesus Christ meant peace, joy, happiness, and eternal life. Their faith in circumcision meant to return to the beggarly elements of the world. "Make no mistake—God is not to be mocked—a man will reap just what he sows."

Paul applies this great law of reaping to the whole range of life, "He who sows for his flesh will reap destruction from the flesh, and he who sows for the Spirit will reap life eternal from the Spirit."<sup>4</sup> The field of human conduct is full of illustrations that portray with frightful illuminating power the tragic results of conduct based on the assumption that a man can beat the laws of God. How foolish! How insane! The laws that govern in the realm of the spiritual are as unalterable as in the material or any other region of life. It was true in Paul's day, it is true in ours.

One morning the clock struck ten in San Quen-

<sup>3</sup> Galatians 5: 16.

<sup>4</sup> Galatians 6: 8.

tin prison and immediately the warden opened the door of a death cell, and accompanied by a minister and guards, entered the room in which was incarcerated a young man, almost a lad in fact. It was his last day on earth, he was to die for his crimes. They found him utterly defeated and cowed, his bravado had vanished, his soul was in agony, and the fear of death had paralyzed him. Crushed, he lay in his cell, in pity they blindfolded his eyes, and they pinioned his arms and assisted him, moaning unintelligible utterings, to walk those few, awful feet to the instrument of death. In a few moments that young man took the drop that robbed him of his life.

What was wrong with that twenty-five-year-old young man? He had killed human beings in cold blood, he had murdered without mercy, and his sin had found him out, but the secret of that terrible tragedy was this. He had failed to guard the gate to his inner life; evil thoughts, obscene literature entered the threshold of his life, and an utter abandonment of personal responsibility for the shedding of human blood in the very teeth of the Divine command: "Thou shalt not kill."<sup>5</sup> He had broken that commandment and it had broken and destroyed

<sup>5</sup> Exodus 20: 13.



### *Gathered Grapes*

him. He had reaped his harvest of gathered grapes.

Nicholas Lenin was the leader in the second revolution of 1927 that overthrew the provisional government of Kerensky and established the Bolshevist regime in Russia of which he became Premier. Son of a noble family, he developed into a man of great will power, he adopted tenets that led to a denial of the highest ideals of humanity and were diametrically opposed to the teachings of Jesus Christ whose noblest conception of service was expressed by the evangelist: "But when he saw the multitudes he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted."<sup>6</sup> Lenine had nothing of that Christlike compassion, blinded by "hate and passion, he persecuted, imprisoned, and slaughtered Russian men and women without compunction until the hand of a retributive providence smote him to the earth, a raving maniac."

Sir Percival Philips, special correspondent to the *British Daily Mail*, dated February 9, 1924, gives a graphic account of the final scene in the life of Lenin. "Bereft of intelligence, but not of conscience, and riddled by a hideous disease, the once all-powerful Dictator of Red Russia spent his last remaining days of activity crawling on all fours

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 9: 36.

like a beast around his room in his carefully guarded retreat at Gorky, apologizing to the furniture for his misdeeds—the memory of which remained amid the ruins of his mind—and shouting, ‘God save Russia and kill the Jews!’ ”

Horrible! you say, but what could you expect when a man denies the instincts of his better nature and assumes that God and sin and punishment are only lingering myths of an ignorant and superstitious age? How powerfully such an incident of moral and physical decay impresses upon us: “Those truths which wake to perish never.”<sup>7</sup> “The wages of sin is death.”<sup>8</sup> “Make no mistake—God is not to be mocked—a man will reap just what he sows.”

The French nation celebrated the centenary of one of its greatest men in 1923. Early in the year a vote was taken to decide who was the greatest Frenchman. Instead of choosing a great military leader such as Napoleon or Foch, they voted by a great majority that Louis Pasteur was the greatest of the French. Here was a man who invested his life in service. He has been called “the supreme benefactor of the human race.” And France gave six months of the year to honor his birth by fete,

<sup>7</sup> Wordsworth, *Imitations of Immortality*.

<sup>8</sup> Romans 6: 23.



pageant, and speech. This lover of humanity was a great student; he was an adventurer into the arcana of nature; by his great patience and courage to make experiments, he discovered a serum for hydrophobia, and by the pasteurization of milk he has saved the lives of thousands of human beings.

Compare the results of such a useful and unselfish life with Lenin, the would-be Czar of Red Russia. What sane man would not choose the harvest of such a life as Pasteur's in preference to the misused power and broken life and tragic end of Lenin?

Over 1900 years ago a young man called Jesus of Nazareth laid down his carpenter tools for the last time. He lifted his eyes toward the hills, beloved since childhood, and the rays of the setting sun illumined his face with a glow of strange beauty, for the hour of his consecration was upon him.

During the past few weeks there had slowly filtered into the hill town strange and exciting news of a man called John who had suddenly appeared with a new note in the religious life of Palestine. His message had a commanding ring and its burden was, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."<sup>9</sup> This news had thrilled the soul of the

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 3: 2.

young carpenter, and his heart responded to the prophetic note; his soul was quickened by a new power. A divine urge came upon him, and he prepared for the call that would summons him to a participation in the work of John. He looked around the shop where he had labored and dreamed his dreams. He breathed a prayer of thanksgiving for the quiet years at Nazareth and reverently closed the door and went out into the whispering night.

What he passed through that night can be imagined. It was a red-letter night in his life. Decisions of the most momentous import were made. His soul travailed and was stirred to its depth. A Voice had spoken and he must answer.

In the dawn of the next morning he kissed his mother tenderly and said, "Mother, my work of a carpenter is done. I must go and find the task that awaits me." He left Nazareth on that morning long ago. At a turn in the road he looked back and saw his mother. He raised his hand in parting benediction and passed on to meet his destiny in a waiting world.

What is the story of that young Carpenter? We do not know at what time the great revelation came to him, whether at the baptism or earlier; but we do know that he walked among men conscious of



a Divine birthright. He gathered a dozen humble men around him, and they lived with him in a happy fellowship and an ever-growing appreciation of him as the Son of God. He taught them about the Father. He proclaimed a new spiritual kingdom among men. He lived a life of strenuous toil, teaching and preaching of the Kingdom. He healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, and raised the dead. He rebuked the religious teachers of his day for their formalism and hypocrisy, and scathingly reproved those in high places for their unrighteous and sinful living. His quiet words uttered in teaching and in miracles of wisdom gripped the hearts and consciencies of men and proclaimed him to be a great Teacher sent from God.

The religious leaders of his time through envy conspired to kill him, and at last this young man from the hill town of Nazareth was crucified on a cross of wood, and in order to make his death more ignoble he died between two thieves. They put him into a tomb sealed with the arms of Imperial Rome. They set a guard to watch his body, but they could not keep him there. He arose from the dead and showed himself to a great host of witnesses and breathed upon them the gift of the Holy Ghost. He returned to the Father, and at his command his disciples went forth into all the world

telling with exultant hearts the glad news of a risen and exalted Savior.

The world has been changed and transformed by his teaching, and millions through faith in his name have found peace and joy and eternal life. The darkness of the world has been smitten and scattered, and everywhere men are discovering that he is the Light of the world.

Everything that is good and true in literature is inspired by him, and every great cathedral was conceived to glorify him. The Church Universal is a living proof of his energizing Spirit. Every hymn of the ages and all the doxologies and the grand hallelujahs of the Church and every painting on her walls and windows speak his praise, and humanity lifts its face to the Unseen but adored Savior and cries, "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood. And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be the glory and dominion for ever and ever."<sup>10</sup>

The harvest that this young Galilean has brought to pass is unutterable and incalculable. "Out of every kindred and tongue and people and nations"<sup>11</sup> they have come and are coming to pro-

<sup>10</sup> Revelation 1: 5, 6.

<sup>11</sup> Revelation 5: 9.



*Gathered Grapes*

claim this mighty and transcendent miracle of *gathered grapes*.

"Make no mistake—God is not to be mocked—a man will reap just what he sows."

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

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### *Speaking Boldly*

BY RAY FREEMAN JENNEY <sup>1</sup>

That I may speak boldly, as I ought to  
speak. Ephesians 6: 20.

**P**AUL wrote these words over eighteen hundred years ago and laid them down as a criterion for his own utterances. Today we must follow his example and speak boldly without fear or favor, let or hindrance. It is an encouraging sign in American life today that men are beginning to speak boldly or, in the true Greek translation, "Freely and truly" concerning their individual well-being and the well-being of others.

Granted that this privilege which is guaranteed to us by the Constitution—the freedom of speech and the freedom of the press—is being abused by men with selfish motives, there is all the more reason why Christians are obligated to speak boldly, both *against* those things that are detrimental to human values and *for* those things which will make for the abundance of life.

<sup>1</sup> For a biographical sketch of Ray Freeman Jenney, see p. 219.



## *Speaking Boldly*

How often in the last few months has been heard the statement, "We are at the end of one age and the beginning of another." When I first heard it, I thought it was a radical utterance. The second or third time I began to give serious consideration to what it might really mean. Are we at the end of an age, an epoch? There are many who contend that we are, and they end their statement there. They are realists tinged with pessimism, and they refuse to prophesy. Despair has blasted hope. There are others, however, who realize that we are at the end of one age, and at the beginning of a new, and their emphasis is on what is necessary in order to make the new age something more than just another era given over to apostles of greed and hate. They would make it an age in which we may help to transform and rebuild a world that is shaken to its very core.

### I

First, we will never be able to come to any solution of the world's ills until and unless we face in a realistic manner the obstacles and problems of the Christian faith in a new age. This is not a new thought, nevertheless it is a necessary reminder. Are not these problems the same that Christianity has always faced? you ask. No categorical "yes"

or "no" will suffice. The problems are the same in every age, and yet different. The conquests of Christianity at critical epochs of history seem like marvels of romance rather than records of sober facts. A little band of disciples of a crucified carpenter from an obscure town inaugurated a missionary movement which in less than three centuries conquered the Roman Empire. The spiritual conquests and transformation of the virile pagan races which emerged out of the northern forests and, in the fifth century, overthrew the Roman civilization was, perhaps, an even greater marvel. So we might go on to relate in sentence after sentence the thrilling story of the Christian faith, age after age doing what one would have supposed to be the impossible. In fact, the Christian faith at its best has specialized in doing the impossible.

Life is ever a matter of problem and solution. Today as we are confronted with the task of the adaptation of the Christian spirit to a new age, we must recognize the fact that our problem is indifferently in many respects from that which has faced any other age. New obstacles are in our way, but there are also new methods at our disposal for clearing away these obstacles, and new solutions to meet these problems were never so largely at the disposition of man. For instance, we are living



in a world, whether we care to recognize it or not, that is increasingly coming under the dominance of the scientific method and theory. Now science and the scientific attitude toward life can do one great thing—it can remove superstitions and the magical element in religion from the lives of men and women. Of course, there is a danger to our world of being under the reign of naturalism, and it is but a short step from naturalism to secularism. What naturalism is to the academic mind, secularism is to the practical man. New industrial, economic, and social problems have emerged because the practical man of the world, the *doer*, has too largely put the emphasis in the last one hundred years on things that are seen and handled. However, this naturalistic, mechanistic world view has been shaken out of its comfortable bed by the earthquake shock of a world depression. Again, the violent spirit of nationalism is abroad in the world. Lord Cecil, speaking to an American party of which I was a member that was traveling in England last summer said, "The world today is suffering from an excess of perverted nationalism." We find it in Germany with Hitler, the man of the hour, "riding skilfully the crest of the wave of nationalism like an Hawaiian surf-board expert." He is the rallying spirit of the German people with his

cry, "Germany, awake!" His slogan, "We must think only of Germany," which appeals to the sub-human and prejudiced emotions, intensifies and aggravates the anti-semitic hatred. We find it in Italy with Mussolini as its high priest. We find it in America with its Big Naval Program. If this nationalistic spirit continues to go on, it will mean our spiritual death.

## II

In the second place, applied Christianity—in its broadest and truest sense—must help, not only in the salvaging but in the saving of the world. The hour has struck! No longer can we live on religious faiths that are out of harmony with known truths.

Over one hundred years ago a new and magnificent Cathedral was built in St. Petersburg. This cathedral was dedicated to St. Isaac, one of the holy men of Russia, and the builders ransacked the world to find costly materials for its structure. Finally, in 1858, the extravagant structure was completed. It had taken forty years of labor and nearly twelve million dollars in cash to complete St. Isaac's Cathedral, the largest and most impressive church in St. Petersburg. And what is it today? Last summer, while in Leningrad, I visited St. Isaac's Cathedral



which is now operated by the Soviet Government as an anti-religious museum to discredit the very faith it was originally erected to defend.

Why has the old Russian religion died? Mainly because it failed to keep pace with the new knowledge of the modern world. In the cathedral we saw exhibits designed to show the ignorance of the former worshipers and the duplicity of the former priests. There are bottles which the priests claimed contained the tears of the saints; clothing which the priests had said was worn by the Virgin Mary. But the most striking thing in the museum is a wire, two hundred feet in length, on the end of which a heavy bronze ball is suspended from the dome. The wire and ball form a gigantic pendulum which swings across the face of a circle on the floor of the museum. If the earth were stationary the pendulum of course would always move in the same arc, but since the earth is rotating there is a steady and noticeable deviation from the original line of the pendulum movement. This apparatus is used to prove that the priests were liars when, for centuries, they told the people of Russia that the earth stands still. Day after day this pendulum swings in the ex-cathedral to discredit the ignorant, superstitious, anti-scientific religion of the past. This is way the old Russian religion died

—because it failed to assimilate the new knowledge of the modern world. Intelligent people realized that these relics were frauds and that the earth is moving, while the Russian Church ignored this new knowledge and clung to its old teaching and its old appeal. Again, the Russian religion made no serious attempt to meet the practical needs of the Russian community—in education and for a new and more equitable economic order. Instead, for the most part, the Greek Orthodox Church was a burden to its adherents. No wonder that the people, when they came into power, threw off the cumbersome burden that had bowed them down.

The hour has struck for the serious business, not only of speaking boldly, but of translating the old words into phrases that will be more helpful and meaningful to our generation. It will not do us any good to shout the same outworn words louder. It is not a megaphone or a loud speaker that is needed, but a vivid and vital interpretation of the great old truths in new forms. It was Huxley who said that "the first requisite of a man of science is moral earnestness." This requirement is not confined to science alone, but exists in all phases of life. We must "go scientific" in the best sense of the word. That is, we must not be afraid to accept as the basis of our faith that which is in con-



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formity with the fullest conception of truth which we have discovered or are able to discover. We need to remember this in the Presbyterian Church. For instance, we have witnessed this last year the reaction of belated minds in that denomination toward Mrs. Pearl S. Buck, the talented author and honest and intelligent disciple of Jesus. She makes a plea that we recognize the contribution the Chinese have to make to the cultural values of life. She believes in foreign missions. She closes one of her articles with this statement:

By birth and ancestry I am an American; by choice and belief I am a Christian; but by the years of my life, by sympathy and feeling, I am Chinese. As a Chinese I say to you what many Chinese have said to me: "Come to us no more in arrogance of spirit. Come to us as brothers and fellow-men. Let us see in you how your religion works. Preach to us no more, but share with us that better and more abundant life which your Christ lived. Give us your best, or nothing."

The question we face here is this—is there room in the missionary enterprise in its present form for the missionary who does not fit into the standardized pattern set by the boards? The Laymen's Report emphasized the need for a better qualified missionary, less taken up with denominational and board routine, and more capable of dealing with

the new movements of thought which are running through the world. But the history of far too many missionary societies shows that the arrival on a field of a worker with independence of mind and individuality of action is generally the signal for a struggle. Remember David Livingstone. How we honor him now, yet in his day the conservatives criticized him. His was a threefold program—(1) Evangelization; (2) Exploration; (3) Emancipation. These were his watchwords. No man ever set himself a more tremendous task. Yet, when he returned to England and announced his plan of campaign the conservative brethren of his day advised him to confine his efforts to evangelization. Thank God, he did not take their advice!

Someone might say, "But that was a long time ago." Yes, it was a long time ago, but we do not need to go back to find our examples of this effort on the part of sincere people who with belated minds and a standardized lip allegiance to doctrinal formulas try to block the advance of the Kingdom of God in an ongoing world. Think of Albert Schweitzer, forced to accept the most humiliating conditions before he was allowed to go as a self-supporting doctor into the Congo. Think of C. F. Andrews, long since separated from the organized missionary movement in India because of his



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friendship and relationship to Gandhi. See even Stanley Jones, great Methodist missionary and statesman, continually subjected to criticism in his own denomination. On the one hand the boards call for missionaries capable of leadership under unprecedented conditions. "On the other hand, they demand conformity, either to patterns of action or to patterns of thought, or to both. The resulting situation is self-defeating in its very essence." Statesmanship is needed today as perhaps never before in all our missionary work, both foreign and domestic. Duplication is no longer either to be justified or tolerated. There is tragic need of social engineers of vision and valor both in the local church and in the mission boards of all our denominations.

### III

In the third place, the hour has struck when we must discover the authority and power that is in the heart of the Christian religion. That demands that we give a personal demonstration of the faith within us. Religion must be an individual experience which enables us to have a sense of that which is vital, and an appreciation of those values of life which demand that, as men and women of conviction, we go out to help transform the world.

The acid test of Christianity is the Christian. We must recover the lost radiance of the Christian religion. There is no one way to find God. Our fathers made the mistake of supposing that; *we* must not make the same mistake. Michael Fairless in *The Roadmender* tells of a child from the slums who, after listening to the spell of music made by the hand organ, put up his face to be kissed by the hardened old organ grinder. But he swore at the child and struck him a blow, at which the child ran away in fear. A few days later the organ man met with an accident and lay for days in a hospital where he was all the time haunted by the memory of that upturned face. As soon as he was well again he went in search of the child that wanted to be kissed, playing the tunes he knew would draw the children out of the streets and alleys to his organ. He never found the child whom he had repelled, but in his loving search for him he became kind and gentle, loving and noble in spirit. Fairless says of him, "He saw the face of a little child and looked on God." Ah, yes!

The secret of the Christian religion lies in the empirical method of exploration; that is, the appeal to experience and to facts. This was Christ's way of meeting all the issues of life in the first century. In answer to questioners he said, "Come and see and



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you will find out by living, by following, by doing." If the religion of Jesus Christ is to survive, it will survive in personal experience, but it will not end there. It must be made portable, so that it can go out to transform the world and rebuild its ruins; help to change apostles of greed and hate into disciples of justice and good will; enable fearless souls to speak boldly and, what is more, give a living demonstration of the faith within them.

Aye, we must speak boldly by voice and life the truth about the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, and the intrinsic worth of every individual.

Be strong!

We are not here to play, to dream, to drift;  
We have hard work to do, and loads to lift;  
Shun not the struggle—face it; 'tis God's gift.

Be strong!

Say not, "The days are evil. Who's to blame?"  
And fold the hands and acquiesce—oh shame!  
Stand up, speak out, and bravely, in God's name.

Be strong!

It matters not how deep intrenched the wrong,  
How hard the battle goes, the day how long;  
Faint not—fight on! Tomorrow comes the song.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Maltbie Babcock.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

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### *The Apostles of the Impossible*

BY DOUGLASS BUCHANAN <sup>1</sup>

I can do all things through Christ which  
strengtheneth me.                      Phillipians 4: 13.

A CELEBRATED musician visiting a friend in the country went with his host to church. The next time he paid a visit to the same friend, the musician declined the invitations of his host to go to church, unless he could be assured that he would that day hear a message that would move him to attempt the impossible. The text is Paul's challenge to those who say: "It cannot be done—it is impossible." Chained to a guard, a prisoner in the imperial city of Rome, he was the apostle of the impossible. What chance had he to turn the Roman citizens to Christ, chained as he was to a guard? Yet his prison became his pulpit, his guards changed daily became his congregation, his converts numbered the greatest portion of the Praetorian guard, until the good news of salvation through Christ was heralded throughout the palaces—Paul's im-

<sup>1</sup> For a biographical sketch of Douglass Buchanan, see p. 212.



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possibility had been transformed into God's possibility.

I

The first remark I wish to make is that the progress of the world today is due to men who have been the apostles of the impossible. "We specialize in impossibilities," asserts Dr. W. Whitney, Director of the Laboratory of the General Electric Company, at Schenectady, New York. Our scientists have overcome obstacles which apparently had been unsurmountable. For years the fight between the electric light and the gas lamp was a draw. At a convention in Chicago a speaker said, "The solution of our electric light problem is to make a lamp three hundred times more powerful than any we now have." Of course everyone knew it could not be done, and the meeting broke up in gloom. But Dr. Coolidge, to whom the word impossible was unknown, experimenting with tungsten, discovered that while every other metal becomes more pliable with heat—tungsten follows the reverse—and by cooling becomes more pliable, and by heating becomes hardened. Five years later he drew the hardest of metals into a thin filament which made possible the tungsten lamp and the progress of electric illumination. In another room there is Dr.

Langmuir, who gave the building trades the hydrogen arc-welding process through which buildings can be constructed without noise; also he gave us the vacuum tubes used in our radio sets. In another room there is Dr. Wilson, in another Dr. Davey—all apostles of the impossible. The story of the Atlantic Cable is the story of the impossible. For years the scientists had been able to increase the susceptibility of iron to magnetism by only seven per cent. Yet the cable needed an increase of several hundreds per cent to send messages to Europe beneath the sea. They said it could not be done—but the audacious apostles of the impossible experimented with a combination of sixty per cent nickel and ten per cent iron until the magnetism was increased many hundreds per cent. The indomitable spirit of achievement which inspires these apostles of the impossible is heralded in a little motto in the main office of the laboratory at Schenectady:

Got any rivers they say are uncrossable?

Got any mountains you can't tunnel through?

We specialize in the wholly impossible,

Doing the thing that no one can do.

## II

The things which you say are impossible are im-



possible only because you think they are impossible. To the heroic, the progressive, the word—impossible—is unknown. Napoleon is quoted as saying, "Impossible is a word found only in the dictionary of fools." I read that Rear Admiral McGowan, Paymaster General of the United States Navy, has had a little card printed and circulated among the clerks of his office. On the one side printed in gray type are the words, "It can't be done," on the other side printed in bold black letters are the words, "But here it is." It is designed to prevent some of his clerks who are easily discouraged from giving way to their doubts and pessimism.

The secret of courageous living is a refusal to accept things as they are and to risk the *impossible*. The coward accepts conditions, the hero is perpetually engaged in creating new conditions.

What a call for heroic living there is today. Here is a man who has been let out of the position and line of work for which he has been trained and in which he has served for a number of years. All the doors are closed. He must launch out and try another line of endeavor. I know of engineers and construction men who are becoming candy makers. I know a real estate man who has become a photographer. I know a mechanic who has turned to life insurance and makes more than he ever made in

the shop. And they ride out like the knights of old to tilt against the world. But some say it cannot be done. They have an inborn timidity. They quail before the new conditions and fall by the wayside. The one lives valiantly, the other in a cowardly fashion, and the difference between the two is that little word—*Can't*. Edgar Guest calls "can't" the enemy of mankind, and he says:

Can't is the *worst word* that's written or spoken.  
Doing more harm here than slander and lies.  
On it is many a strong spirit broken,  
And with it many a good purpose dies.  
It springs from the lips of the thoughtless each morning,  
And robs us of courage we need through the day.  
It rings in our ears like a timely sent warning,  
And laughs when we falter and fall by the way.

Can't is the word that is foe to ambition.  
An enemy ambushed to shatter your will.  
Its prey is forever the man with a mission,  
And bows but to courage, and patience, and skill.  
Hate it, with hatred that's deep and undying,  
For once it is welcomed 'twill break any man.  
Whatever the goal you are seeking, keep trying,  
And answer this demon by saying, I can.<sup>2</sup>

### III

There are certain doors apparently impossible to

<sup>2</sup> Published by Reilly & Lee. Used by permission.



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open which we by our own courage and initiative can open, but there are other doors which we can open only through the enabling power of God. Paul's monstrous boast and his magnificent confession of faith, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me,"<sup>3</sup> is based upon the supernatural power granted to those whose lives are in touch with this source of power. There are certain things which we can do in our own strength and there are certain other things which we can do only because of the strength which God gives us. Paul's assurance can be the assurance of the Christian today. Every Christian is to be an apostle of the impossible. If the word "can't" is found only in the dictionary of fools. Surely it has no place in the dictionary of the man or woman who trusts in or knows their God. Listen to these words of outstanding Christian leaders regarding God and the impossible:

1. F. B. Meyer: "You do not test the resources of God until you try the impossible."

2. Andrew Murray, of South Africa: "We have a God who delights in impossibilities."

3. William Booth: "God loves with a great love the man whose heart is bursting with a sublime passion for the impossible."

<sup>3</sup> Philippians 4: 13.

4. Phillips Brooks: "Do not pray for easy tasks, pray to be stronger men. Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers, pray for powers equal to your tasks. Then the doing of your work shall be no miracle, but you yourself shall be a miracle."

5. Charles Haddon Spurgeon: "One man says, I will do as much as I can. Any fool can do that. He who believes in Christ does what he cannot do, attempts the impossible and performs it."

### IN CONCLUSION

Is there in your life some besetting sin which you say you can't overcome? Is there some fault which you say you cannot eradicate? Is there some hard duty which you say you cannot perform? Is there some dream, some ambition, some shining goal which you say you cannot reach? Is there some problem which you say you cannot solve? Is there some situation so desperate that your head and heart throb with anxiety because of it?

Repeat to yourself the creed of Paul, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." His grace shall become sufficient for me, for his strength shall be made perfect in my weakness. Go out, and do, and dare, and achieve in that faith. Believe in it with all your heart, and act upon it with all your being, and you will discover that your impossibility has become God's possibility.



## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

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### *Christ Pre-eminent*

BY LEROY DEININGER <sup>1</sup>

He is the head of the body, the church  
... that in all things he might have the pre-  
eminence. Colossians 1: 18.

THERE is a story that a great artist painted a beautiful picture of the Last Supper. As his friends came to see it they remarked particularly about the elegance of detail wrought on the cup in the Master's hand. Realizing that something of lesser importance quite outshone the Master's face, he took up his brush and struck out the cup crying, "Christ must be the center of this picture."

That is exactly the position of Paul regarding his message and ministry. So he writes to the Colossians that Christ must "come to hold first place." To the Corinthians he puts the same truth into other words, "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For a biographical sketch of LeRoy Deininger, see p. 217.

<sup>2</sup> I Corinthians 2: 2.

There should be nothing unusual in a Christian minister thus putting the main emphasis upon loyalty to the founder of his faith. Yet strangely enough Christians are constantly losing this Christo-centric emphasis. Not a few voices are being raised today to say that in the interest of co-operation with other religions Christians had better soft-pedal talk about personal loyalty to Jesus and stress instead his moral principles.

The facts of Christian history, however, are with St. Paul. Down the ages, the Christian Church has been strongest; Christian experience has been richest and most vital when Jesus has been magnified. To fail now to give Christ first place will be to lose the very thing that has made Christianity unique and powerful. Let us consider at least four things that will be accomplished if modern Christianity can recapture this ancient and important emphasis.

First of all, the task of Christianity will be *simplified*. The task of evangelism is continually hampered by non-essential doctrines that barnacle-like fasten themselves to the simple Gospel message. Somewhere Phillips Brooks speaks of the duty of a minister to limit his message to "the fewness of the things it is necessary to believe in order to become a Christian."



Hear the testimony of Dr. E. Stanley Jones in his golden book, *The Christ of the Indian Road*:<sup>3</sup> "When I went out to India I was trying to hold a very long line—a line that stretched clear from Genesis to Revelation, on to Western civilization and on to the Western Christian Church. I found myself bobbing up and down that line. . . . The battle was almost invariably pitched at one of those three places. . . . I had the feeling that the heart of the matter was being left out. Then I saw that I could and would shorten my line, that I could take my stand at Christ and before that non-Christian world refuse to know anything save Jesus Christ and him crucified. Then I saw that there is where I should have been all the time. I saw that the Gospel lies in the person of Jesus, that he himself is the Good News, that my one task was to live and present him. My task was simplified."

Dr. Jones goes on to say that at the place of Jesus all other questions were settled. When men properly came under the sway of the Person, they were led to a proper solution of other Christian doctrines. Dr. P. Carnegie Simpson in his helpful book, *The Fact of Christ*, has shown us that for a man rightly to face the truth of what Jesus was

<sup>3</sup> Copyright, 1930. By permission of The Abingdon Press.

and is opens the door to a new life. It was doubtless idle curiosity that led Zacchaeus to try to see "what Jesus was like," and yet that idle whim led to a glorious experience.

Why cannot we be content to simply introduce men to Christ and trust him to take care of the entire situation? That would be to take up the New Testament method. For at the first, when men cried, "What must I do to be saved?"<sup>4</sup> the simple and sufficient answer was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."<sup>5</sup> We need not fear that this will be a dilution of Christian doctrine or a counterfeiting of Christian experience. "Give us Jesus, just Jesus," said a Hindu to Dr. Jones. "Do not be afraid that we will make a human Jesus out of him, for his divinity will shine out of its own accord."<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, to give Jesus first place will *vivify* our Christianity. Whenever there has been a new emphasis upon Jesus there has been a fresh outburst of spiritual vitality and virility. If Jesus is the Gospel, then when we center on him we are "every moment upon the vital."

"And in none other is there salvation,"<sup>7</sup> de-

<sup>4</sup> Acts 16: 30.

<sup>6</sup> *Op. cit.*

<sup>5</sup> Acts 16: 31.

<sup>7</sup> Acts 4: 12.



clared Peter in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost. Similarly Paul could say, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."<sup>8</sup> Thus all through the Christian ages men have been testifying that in Christ they have found the way to life. To enjoy this new life in Christ it is not necessary to have a complete explanation of the way in which this life is imparted. We can invite men to "come and see" and enjoy the glorious fact of the Atonement. When the fact is experienced, the explanation will work itself out.

In a choice passage in his sermon, "The Infinite Artist," Dr. Frederick F. Shannon<sup>9</sup> discusses the Damascus Road experience of St. Paul. He writes, "'But,' you reply, 'Paul may have been self-deceived.' Very well! If such a human and historic fact as Paul is wrought by tricks, blessed are we if such tricks are played upon us. A similar 'trick' was played upon Augustine, Xavier, Luther, Wesley, Edwards, Beecher, Brooks, Moody—yea, and upon multitudes of heaven-possessioned women, maidens, and youths out of every generation and under all skies. 'By their fruits ye shall know them.'<sup>10</sup> Then scale the walls, O man, and behold

<sup>8</sup> II Corinthians 5: 17.

<sup>10</sup> Matthew 7: 20.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted by permission of author.

the orchards of God! Climb the fences and gaze into the gardens of God! For the celestial skies and dews and rains of two thousand years have poured their regenerating tides down into those orchards and gardens and they bloom and burst with fruit in every land."

Jesus not only imparts new life but furnishes also the dynamic to live victoriously and usefully. "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," cried one who knew that Christianity was a vital fellowship with a living Spirit. Someone once asked Phillips Brooks, "Can one be a Christian without conscious, personal fellowship with Jesus Christ?" Replied Brooks, "Conscious, personal fellowship with Jesus is Christianity."

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit has often been preached in a way that obscures rather than clarifies. But for the New Testament Christians, the Spirit which came into their hearts at Pentecost and continually empowered them for their tasks was practically identified with the Spirit of Jesus. The risen Christ speaking to the church in Laodicea puts it clearly when he says, "Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice



and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him and he with me.”<sup>11</sup>

Our religion is not only morality but as Matthew Arnold said, “Morality lit with emotion.” It is fellowship with Jesus that is the secret of vital Christian living. It is related that on the eve of a great battle some of Napoleon’s generals were fearful of the outcome. Sensing their alarm, the great commander called them into his tent one by one, and all that passed between them was a firm hand-clasp. It was enough. They had caught the contagion of his courage and enthusiasm and looked upon the morrow with confidence. That is a poor illustration of what fellowship with Jesus Christ may do for a fearful and defeated human soul.

Furthermore, to make Jesus pre-eminent will *beautify* our Christianity. All of us at times have sympathized with the little girl who prayed that God would make bad people good and good people nice. One reason why Christianity makes such slow progress is because there is so little attractive Christian living.

The reason is not far to seek. Christians have lost sight of the winsome Christ and have failed to become like him. Gipsy Smith has immortalized

<sup>11</sup> Revelation 3: 20.

a chorus beginning, "Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me." That is a wonderful prayer and more of us ought to be making it our own. To try to become like Jesus would be to avoid unlovely extremes in our lives. We can never become too Christlike," writes the author of *The Christ of Every Road*.<sup>12</sup> Religion has had an excess of unlovely things but never too much of Christlikeness.

Dr. Shannon tells this story of St. Francis of Sales: Sitting one evening in the tender sunset glow, a little child nestles by his side with his little chessboard, and saint and child played together. An austere brother took him severely to task. "For shame, Francis, that you should engage in a foolish game with a foolish child! What if it were told you that the Lord will presently appear?" "Brother," replied St. Francis, "I would finish the game. It was for his glory I began it."<sup>13</sup> A true saint indeed, a winsome spirit worthy of the name of the gracious Jesus.

To focus attention on Jesus will be to beautify our conceptions of God. It has been pointed out many times that, despite the importance of our belief in the deity of Jesus, the unique Christian

<sup>12</sup> By permission of The Abingdon Press.

<sup>13</sup> By permission of the author.



revelation is not the godlike Christ but the Christ-like God. "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father."<sup>14</sup> The Eternal God has the qualities of Jesus, that was the new thing that Jesus came to reveal.

First among these Christlike qualities is that of love. It is also a fundamental Christian teaching that Christians will best show their religion by exhibiting this quality. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."<sup>15</sup> It was thus in the first century for then Christianity laid hold on the pagan world because the pagans were led to exclaim, "Behold how these Christians love one another!"

If Christians can exhibit the beauty of Jesus and the loveliness of Christian love and brotherliness in this age they may also triumph over modern paganism. Like the creeping grass covers and beautifies the scars of the earth, so may the beautifying Spirit of Jesus transform the ugliness and chaos of this modern world.

Several years ago there came to me an experience that has been for me a parable of the beauty that might result if the Spirit of Jesus could have its way in our day. A ministers' chorus of which

<sup>14</sup> John 14: 9.

<sup>15</sup> John 13: 35.

I happen to be a member was giving a concert in Akron, Ohio. Our host arranged for the chorus to visit the great Goodyear Zeppelin dock where at the time the ill-fated "Akron" was being constructed. There in that vast structure which symbolizes the scientific achievement of our time we were given permission to sing a religious chorus.

What do you suppose we sang? The choice of the song was quite accidental, but God grant that it may have been prophetic. Well, in that vast dock with the blows of hammers ringing overhead we sang:

Come, Spirit, come, with light divine,  
Descend, O heavenly dove,  
Shine in until this heart of mine,  
Is all aglow with love.

Strangely enough, the place had perfect acoustics. As we ended our song, silvery echoes came floating back to us with a beauty that we had never heard before. The incident has stood for me as a prophecy of the harmony and beauty life would have if all of the marvelous mechanical progress of man were to come under the spell of Jesus.

Finally and most important of all, the rediscovery of Jesus will *unify* our Christianity. If we can but center upon Christ, the lamentable divisions



of the body of Christ may be healed. Creeds are, of course, necessary and inevitable. But it would help if all would recognize that creeds are but fragmentary statements of truths that transcend definition. "If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly," was once demanded of Jesus. But such spiritual mysteries as the incarnation cannot be so easily explained.

"Brothers, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, I beg of you all drop these party cries. Has Christ been parceled out?" cries St. Paul to the Corinthians—and to us. The needy world stands before the Church in its tragedies and chaos. Shall then the various groups of Christians spend their time in argument? Or to change the figure, shall bands of Christian soldiers fight among each other and neglect the common enemy.

May we once more quote from *The Christ of Every Road*. "At the Jerusalem Conference we could feel the tingle of the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy. When the Conference was nearing its close we found we had not settled the controversy—we had simply transcended it. We saw that there was something bigger than each—the Gospel. . . . Christ held us both."

The triumph of Christianity waits for that Christian unity for which Jesus prayed. And that

*Prize Sermons*

lowed pastorates at Hope Chapel, New York City, and Markham Memorial Church, St. Louis. His life work, however, has been to relate religion to industry. He organized and for ten years headed the Department of Church and Labor of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. During that time he founded New York's famous Labor Temple. He is well known for his social writings and the part he has played as an arbitrator in industrial disputes. Of late years he has swung into the field of publicity and has accepted large assignments in religious and charitable publicity. He has written many books, including *The Workingman and the Church*, *The Gospel of Labor*, *Messages to Workingmen*, *The Church and Labor*, *Principles of Successful Church Advertising*, *The Challenge of the City*, *Up from the Bowery* (Autobiography). He has also been a featured writer in newspaper syndicates and was for three years religious editor of the Newspaper Enterprise Association.

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### *Men Who Wrote These Sermons*

Russell H. Conwell at the Baptist Temple. Then he successively served the Normal Park Baptist Church, Chicago, the Baptist Temple, Brooklyn (Minister of Religious Education), and the first Baptist Church, Boulder, Colorado. From 1930-33 he was Assistant Professor of Religion in the University of Colorado. In 1933 he became pastor of the Fountain Street Baptist Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he is now located. Articles from his pen have appeared in the *Crozier Quarterly* and other periodicals.

### FREDERICK W. SCHROEDER

MR. SCHROEDER was born in Pectone, Illinois, in 1896. He received his college training at Elmhurst College and his theological work at Eden Theological Seminary, where he graduated in 1918. Following his ordination he was appointed to take charge of a newly established church in Chicago which then had twenty-five members. This is the church to which he now ministers, the Tabor Evangelical, with a membership of five hundred and fifty. Mr. Schroeder has found time to serve his Church in many ways. He is a member of the Board of Directors of Eden Theological Seminary and a vice-president of the Home for Orphans and the Aged at Bensenville.

### CHARLES STELZLE

CHARLES STELZLE was born in New York City in 1869. After training at Moody Bible Institute he became pastor of Hope Chapel, Minneapolis. Then fol-

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University at Lafayette, Indiana. For the past two years he has been pastor of the Central Methodist Episcopal Church, Mansfield, Ohio. His articles have been frequently published in the *Christian Century*.

### RAY FREEMAN JENNEY

DR. JENNEY was born at Meridan, New Hampshire, in 1891. He was educated at Kimball Union Academy, Meridan, Columbia University, and Union Theological Seminary. From Columbia he has the degree M.A.; from Union, the B.D. He also has a D.D. conferred upon him by Knox College. He has pastored Faith Presbyterian Church, New York City, First Presbyterian Church Galesburg, Illinois, and for some years headed religious work at the University of Pennsylvania. For the past five years he has been the pastor of Park Presbyterian Church, Syracuse, New York. One of his sermons was also selected for inclusion in the publication of the *Church Management* 1933 contest.

### MILTON M. MCGORRILL

MR. MCGORRILL was born in Clinton, Maine, in 1897. Bowdoin was his college (A.B. 1919). Columbia gave him his A.M. He also did graduate work at Union Theological Seminary and Chicago Divinity School. For two years he was director of Young People's Work for the American Baptist Publication Society. During a part of this time he also served as assistant to Dr.



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Ohio. During the war he was Y. M. C. A. secretary at Camp Sherman. He has been a contributor to the *Evangelical Messenger* and the *Evangelical Crusader*.

#### FRANK FITT

MR. FITT is forty-four years of age and a lifelong Presbyterian. He has his A.B. from Williams College, B.D. from Union Theological Seminary, and his M.A. from Columbia. His pastorates have included the Highland Park, Illinois, Presbyterian Church, and the church he now serves, the Grosse Pointe Memorial Church (Presbyterian), Grosse Pointe Farms, Detroit, Michigan. Mr. Fitt is a contributor to several religious publications and his articles have appeared frequently in the *Christian Century* and *Church Management*. One of his sermons was published with those judged "best" in the 1934 contest conducted by *Church Management*.

#### MELVIN C. HUNT

MR. HUNT was born in Cerre Gordo County, Iowa. His undergraduate work was done in several colleges, Nebraska Wesleyan conferring the A.B. upon him. Work in Boston University brought the S.T.B. He also has a M.A. for work in Social Ethics in Harvard and requirements for the Ph.D. have been completed. He has served churches in Boston, Massachusetts, South Bend and Terre Haute, Indiana, and for eight years was pastor of the church of the Wesley Foundation at Pardue

CORDIE J. CULP

DR. CULP was born at Wintersville, Ohio, in 1872. He attended a nearby rural school and then Richmond (Ohio) College, which gave him his A.B. in 1895. He took his seminary work at Princeton Theological Seminary and has a M.A. conferred by the Princeton University. Churches served have included the Fairview Presbyterian Church, Glenmoore, Pennsylvania, the First Presbyterian Church, Bound Brook, New Jersey, and since 1918 the First Presbyterian Church, New Brunswick, New Jersey. In 1914 New York University conferred upon him the Ph.D. degree, and in 1920 Rutgers gave him his D.D. Dr. Culp is a Rotarian. He served during the war as Religious Work Director at Camp May. In 1932 he made a special study of Palestine under the direction of the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem.

LEROY DEININGER

MR. DEININGER was born in Ashland County, Ohio, about forty-one years ago. He graduated from Ashland High School, North Central College, Naperville, Illinois, and the Evangelical Theological Seminary at Naperville. He holds the A.B. degree from college and and the B.D. from the seminary. He served churches at Marshallville, Napoleon, Tiffin, Cleveland, and Marion, Ohio, and for the past five years has been the minister of the Main Street Evangelical Church, Mansfield,



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NEIL J. CRAWFORD

MR. CRAWFORD was born in Farmersburg, Indiana, in 1902. He attended the local grade and high schools. In 1925 he was graduated (Magna Cum Laude) from Eureka College. Several churches were served by him as student pastor during the period of his college work. He received his B.D. from Yale in 1927. Following graduation from Yale he served as Director of Religious Education at the Lakewood, Ohio, Christian Church and since 1929 has been the pastor of the West Boulevard Christian Church, Cleveland, Ohio. He has been a contributor to the *Evangelical Crusader*, *Church Management*, the *Christian Century*, and a number of volumes, including the *Cokesbury Funeral Manual* and the *Cokesbury Marriage Manual*. Since 1929 he has served as Visiting Professor of New Testament Literature in Shauffler College, Cleveland, Ohio.

FREDERICK W. CROPP, JR.

MR. CROPP was born at Mingo Junction, Ohio, in 1904. Wooster College gave him his A.B. in 1926, and Princeton Theological Seminary added the S.T.B. degree in 1929. He went from the seminary to the First Presbyterian Church of Wheeling, West Virginia, as assistant pastor and served in that capacity until 1931 when he became the pastor of the same church, the position he now holds. Articles from his pen have appeared from time to time in *Church Management*.

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EDWARD O. CLARK

EDWARD O. CLARK, a son of a minister, was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1893. He received his B.A. from Bucknell University in 1915, his M.A. from the same school in 1918, and his B.D. from Colgate-Rochester Divinity School in 1921. He served Baptist Churches at Churchville, New York, Pitman, New Jersey, and is now pastor of the Chevy Chase Baptist Church, Washington, D. C., where he has been since 1924. His pastoral experience was interrupted by the World War. During the war he served as Chaplain of the seventy-fourth Artillery (C. A. C.). Since 1929 he has also served as instructor in Psychology in the School of Religion of Howard University.

ARTHUR E. COWLEY

DR. COWLEY was born at Newcastle-on-Tyne, England, in 1896. He came to America when he was fifteen years of age. He received his higher education at Ohio State University, Colgate-Rochester Divinity School, and the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has a B.D. from Colgate-Rochester and a Ph.D. from the Southern Baptist Seminary. Pastorates served have been in Columbus, Ohio, Livonia, New York, Lebanon, Indiana, and Shelbyville, Indiana, where he is finishing his fifth year as pastor of the First Baptist Church. A sermon by Dr. Cowley was selected for publication in the 1934 *Church Management* contest.



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He came to this country in 1906 and united with the A. M. E. Zion Church. He held several pastorates and in 1910 was elected as Dean of Hood Theological Seminary, Salisbury, North Carolina. In 1920 he became pastor of John Wesley A. M. E. Zion Church and instructor in the School of Religion, Howard University. In 1924 he left this church for a pastorate in New Rochelle, New York, which he combined with the editorship of the A. M. E. Zion *Quarterly Review*. Then followed a pastorate at Hartford, Connecticut. In 1932 he returned to Howard University as instructor and pastor. Articles from his pen have appeared in the *Homiletic Review*, and one of his sermons was included in a volume of prize sermons published by The Macmillan Company.

### SAMUEL C. CARSON

MR. CARSON was born in Belfast, Ireland, in 1870. He came to the United States in 1897. He continued his theological studies here at Garrett Biblical Institute. He has held pastorates in Illinois, Michigan, and California. For the past twenty-four years he has been in the beautiful San Joaquin Valley, California, and is just finishing the sixth year as pastor of Oildale Congregational Church at Oildale Center. Articles written by him have appeared in the *Homiletic Review*, *The Pacific*, and local papers.

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tral Presbyterian Church of Huntington, Long Island, and for the past six years his present pastorate, South Presbyterian Church, Yonkers, New York. Dr. Buchanan's ministry has been distinguished by his evangelistic efforts. He has helped many churches with their enlistment campaigns. He is the chaplain of the police department of Yonkers and has served as a chaplain of the New York State Police.

### RAYMOND C. BURNS

MR. BURNS was born in the township of Mayfield, Fulton County, New York, in 1898. He advises us that he was educated in a country school, one teacher for eight grades, Broadalbin, New York, High School, Colgate University, and Union Theological Seminary. He has a B.A. from Colgate and a B.D. from Union. He wears a Phi Beta Kappa key. His career includes work in a sawmill, tannery, as plumber's assistant, and many other varieties as he sought to finance school needs. In his profession he was first a boys' worker at First Mariners Baptist Church, New York City, then minister of Kings Highway Baptist Church, Brooklyn, and for the past five years has been the associate pastor of the First Baptist Church of Greater Cleveland, Ohio.

### WILLIAM ORLANDO CARRINGTON

MR. CARRINGTON was born in Georgetown, British Guiana, in 1879. He was educated in the public schools of that city and then privately trained for the ministry.



## THE MEN WHO WROTE THESE SERMONS

### ALFRED BRIGHT

ALFRED BRIGHT was born at Lachine, Quebec, Canada, about fifty years ago. He graduated from Montreal High School and Queen's University (Kingston) and has taken graduate work in Yale University. He holds the degrees of B.A. and B.D. For thirteen years he was pastor of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Sherbrooke, Quebec, and for the past seven years has been pastor of Riverdale Presbyterian Church in Toronto. This church has the distinction of having the largest church school of any Presbyterian church in Canada. The enrolment is fourteen hundred; average attendance, one thousand.

### DOUGLASS BUCHANAN

DOUGLASS BUCHANAN was born in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1886. He took his college work at Wooster, graduate study at Princeton, and theological work at both Princeton and McCormick Theological Seminaries. He holds the degrees of A.B. (Wooster), M.A. (Princeton), and D.D. (Wooster). His pastorates have been the North Presbyterian Church of St. Louis, Missouri, First Presbyterian Church of Kansas City, Kansas, Cen-

If the acid test does not come too soon the Church may actually accomplish this break. Then there would be real hope that it might take the next logical step and force the issue with our whole economic system, of which war is only an inevitable by-product. If the Church would follow that road we could expect a greater Pentecost than history has yet recorded. Then would be lifted the shame and rebuke of our timidity which has kept us on the border of our Canaan, but lacking the courage and devotion to push on across.

The days of the covered wagon were tame compared with these if we, like Abraham, will become partners with the Eternal God in building an enduring spiritual order.



Cross instead of the way of glory in this matter of rights and armaments. And no assurance could be given that there would be no predatory nation ready to devour such a kindly disposed country. But redemption from this horrible body of death to which our Western civilization is joined may not be possible at any less cost. We do well to recall, too, that Calvary is never the end of the story; in the Christian scheme of life there is always beyond it an open tomb and a risen life. This will appear to many as the counsel either of blind despair or unrelieved foolishness. Before passing such judgment, however, it would be well to ponder the lesson of history at that point and inquire as to what real hope there is for a nation that persists in going the way of intrenched selfishness. Abraham based everything, literally everything, upon his confidence in God. In our trust in the God of Jesus so slight that we really fear to make the adventure along the way of peace, love, and self-sacrifice? If so, let us confess our apostasy and in penitence and humility seek to find for ourselves this spirit of hardihood and daring.

And there is hope in the situation today. The Christian Church seems to be on the verge of breaking with the whole war system; it has made amazing progress in this direction in the last few years.

to be maintained, but a task to be undertaken. His outstanding contribution to religious history has been, not a theology either new or old, but a spirit of utter trust and tireless adventure. He may not have known where he went, but he knew why and with whom. This did not, however, lessen his need for courage. He must have reached middle life when his pilgrimage began; he had accumulated large property holdings; and he had attained influence and leadership in his nation. From the standards even of our day he had made a conspicuous success of life. Then to leave all of this and begin again in a strange land was no easy venture. He went out with almost none of the securities that modern society is beginning to accept as essential. But he had a security of vaster significance: had not the great "I AM" said, "Certainly I will be with thee"? And upon that condition alone Abraham pioneered.

We seem to be caught today in a vicious circle of big business, preparedness, and war. Must the Kingdom of God wait for its establishment until it can be set up by a majority vote? Does not Christianity's central emphasis upon the Cross imply the very opposite? In order to break that vicious circle some nation may need to take the way of the



cal" by those who for various reasons do not wish to try it. But just what other way has proved to be practical? Has the jungle law of survival through struggle, which has undergirded our orthodox political economy, won its right to universal acceptance? Are we at all satisfied that rugged individualism is the way out, even for the most rugged? Has the right to respectable plunder and the appeal to force proved at all beneficent? No nation has ever tried the way of love and demonstrated its futility; nor has any people ever built a civilization on "blood and iron" that has endured. Just why, then, are we afraid to try the way of Jesus?

Chiefly, perhaps, because we lack the spirit of daring faith, which was the third marked characteristic of that man-sized parent pioneer. "He went out, not knowing whither he went." One may have noble vision of nobler objectives; but if he is timid and hesitant; if he is filled with doubts and uncertainties; if he prefers comforts over character; if he would rather be a pensioner on the past than a pioneer of the future; then he can have no part in bringing in that better day which is already sadly overdue. It was this quality of heroic daring that made Abraham known as "The father of the faithful." To him faith was not a tradition

Surely youth faced by such a challenge cannot complain of the lack of opportunity! The task will not be easy or simple; but it is more possible than ever before. Today thousands can see the failure of the old system where before only isolated individuals were so gifted. The rewards to the new poineering will be as different from the old as are the objectives. The youth who would enter the new day seeking fortune or favor for himself should never start. We must have done with all such pagan motives. But to the one who fears neither want nor persecutions, but who does fear comforts for himself when all around is misery, there is great joy and enduring satisfactions awaiting him.

This heroic note is imperative. There is real danger that our somewhat awakened age may be content to accept a readily attainable, and therefore mediocre, goal, rather than to suffer and strive, and wait, for the fuller and truer end. We dare not be satisfied with anything less than the Kingdom of God here on the earth, the commonwealth of neighbors, as Jesus conceived and proclaimed it. Upon those who think that this is too high an objective must lie the burden of proof. What lesser attainment holds any hope for our distraught day? This way of Jesus is sometimes termed "impracti-



from soap to symphonies are directly due to this present order and would all be irretrievably lost if any changes were made. Such people are not even reformists, much less revolutionists. They have not seen the fundamental opposition that exists between the basic assumptions of the present economic system on the one hand, and the major tenets of our Christian faith on the other. They have not seen that the crass and devastating materialism which controlled so much of the modern world—and is by no means extinct yet—is but the inevitable expression of an acquisitive society. They have not seen that the accumulation of wealth, which was one of the major stakes in our old order, was at the price and peril of growing personalities. They have not realized that the lust for profits was the prolific mother of strife and political warfare. They have not seen underneath the veneer of an all too thin civilization the jungle law of tooth and claw still at work. They still think that the old order can be saved. But the Abrahams know that it cannot and should not be retained. The great work to be done is not in Haran, but Canaan. The newly discovered truth is not to be patched on to the old forms of life, but to be carried into new and strange situations, perhaps, and built anew into the city of God.

It would be easy to interpret narrowly Abraham's objective in terms of national destiny or racial purity, or clan aggrandizement; but a truer insight into his thought reveals that these are to be the vehicles only of the fuller understanding of God which has come to him. He did not seek the immediate conversion of the Canaanites, and in that sense might not be called missionary minded; but he did visualize a continuing group which should be God's messenger of life to the nations that did not know him. We may assuredly hold that Abraham sought an enduring collective order that should reflect the character and purpose of God as the old could not. For he was the forerunner of that noble line of prophets who saw that God was more concerned about righteousness than riches, interested more in life than in mere existence.

This task of setting up a new order rather than salvaging an old one, to which Abraham gave himself with such devotion, offers many suggestions for our own day. There still seem to be a large number of our citizens who believe that any talk about the collapse of our present economic system must originate in Moscow; that the system is inherently sound and needs only some minor repair; that all of the good things which we now enjoy



searching, like Ponce de Leon, for the fountains of youth and pleasure; while the role of a would-be economic imperialist simply does not fit the picture. All through the years of his wanderings he was sustained by the goal of an advantaged posterity, a nation that was to be blessed, and to be a blessing, through the ages.

Economists and philosophers may continue to debate the relative merits of altruism, egoism, and prudentialism as the determining motives of conduct; but the simple statement of Jesus, "If a grain of wheat abides alone it dies,"<sup>3</sup> still stands as the most abundantly illustrated truth in human relationships. If Abraham had been seeking only private gain he would have died in Chaldea "successful" and useless and as unknown to succeeding ages as are his contemporaries. It was no accident that the God-seeking and God-worshipping Pilgrims and Puritians left behind them a civilization that has blessed the ends of the earth, while the gold-seeking adventurers who raided the wealth of the Incas left behind them chiefly desolation and bitterness. The organized life of a people can never rise above its sources, nor be more lasting than are the principles upon which it rests.

<sup>3</sup> John 12: 24.

Before there can be effective ethical or social pioneering there must be first this creative vision of God. The true builders of the better order are the prophets, those illuminated ones who see the divine ought in terms of present possibilities. Analysis must precede synthesis Hegel declared; which is the philosophical way of saying that effective doing must follow clear insight. Prophetic religion has as one of its marked characteristics the power to clarify and stimulate vision, so that essentials stand out over against the incidentals and accidentals of life. An age as ethically confused as is our own certainly needs all of the insights which prophetic religion can bring to it. That social dream of the prophets and of Jesus which we have called "The Kingdom of God" will forever remain a dream only unless we are able to rethink God in something like the concepts of Jesus. Racial hatred, war, and exploitation could never exist in a society which was based upon Jesus' thought of God as a loving, here-abiding Father. And when we see God in that light we, too, will become pioneers of that enduring city.

The story of Abraham illustrates another quality requisite to spiritual pioneering, namely, that of having a worthy and adequate goal. He was no mere adventurer seeking new thrills; nor was he



with firm foundations, whose architect and builder is God.”<sup>2</sup> He had a forward-looking faith that saw something better than the best that had, up to that time, been achieved. There were, of course, many splendid things in that ancient Chaldean civilization; but he saw trends that must be changed or ruin would come to the whole structure. No doubt Chaldea had its super-patriots who were horrified at Abraham’s discontent; he may have been told to get out if he did not like the country, and find some other place that did suit him. In addition to being accused of disloyalty to his country, he was probably one of the first heretics in recorded history. For his vision of God was not in keeping with the popular ideas of his time. The “God of Abraham” was a magnificent and disturbing reality in the thought and experience of this pioneer, though it has too often been used in more recent times as a bromide and a barrier against change. To Abraham, as he saw him, God was a fire purging and inspiring, an impelling urge to freedom and discovery, an ever-advancing Leader who could never be imprisoned in ancient forms and customs.

<sup>2</sup> Hebrews 11: 10.

but unwanted youth of this present day who think that all doors of opportunity are bolted and rusted shut—these all have made the same mistake: like Columbus, they have believed that the small island of experience whose shores they have barely touched is the whole continent of human possibilities. The facts, however, are that many thousands of new inventions are registered in the Patent Office in Washington each year; that a long and growing list of notable personalities who have wrought valiantly makes glorious our history since the days of Richard Dana; and it is also a fact that America and the world of the present day open more challenging doors of adventure and service, offer more beckoning frontiers to daring and devout spirits than ever have confronted any previous generation of youth.

We are in an hour as alluring and demanding—and rewarding, as faced that heroic spirit who went out not knowing whither; but who left behind him a new and marvelous race, a world-remaking religion, and the patterns for an enduring civilization. A study of some of the qualities that enabled him to win such magnificent results should inspire and comfort us in an age like this one.

One such characteristic is suggested in the descriptive phrase, "For he was looking for a city



## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

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### *Spiritual Pioneers*

BY MELVIN CHAUNCEY HUNT <sup>1</sup>

And he went out, not knowing whither he  
went. Hebrews 11: 8.

**F**RONTIERS do not pass; they only change. Abraham went out from an old, well-established civilization, in which he himself held a place of no mean honor, to a strange but occupied country, where he became the prophet of a new idea, the founder of a new race. He was a pioneer, not in the geographical sense primarily, but in the realm of ideas and ideals.

The covered wagon period in this country is gone, for the free and open spaces which lured those early caravans are no more; yet frontiers do exist. The Commissioner of Patents who resigned his office a century ago because he felt that everything that could be invented had been invented; the young Richard Dana who declared in the first third of the nineteenth century that he had been born fatally late; and the multitudes of prepared

<sup>1</sup> For a biographical sketch of Melvin Chauncey Hunt, see p. 218.

*LeRoy Deininger*

unity will come by making Christ pre-eminent, by giving him first place in all things. Let us pray and work that the day may come when without hypocrisy we can sing that stirring battle hymn of the the church, "We are not divided, all one body we."

Then indeed the Gates of Hell shall no longer prevail against the Christian army.